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GEORGE HELM

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GEORGE HELM

I

BEHIND THE BEARD

A COMET so dim that it is almost invisible will cause agitated interest in the heavens where great fixed stars blaze nightly unnoticed. Harrison was a large Ohio river town, and in its firmament blazed many and considerable fixed stars—presenting pretty nearly all varieties of peculiarity in appearance and condition. But when George Helm appeared everybody concentrated upon him.

"Did you see that young fellow with the red whiskers stumping down Main Street this afternoon?"—"Did you see that jay in

the funny frock coat and the stove pipe hat?"—"Who's the big hulking chap that looks as if he'd just landed from nowhere?" —"I saw the queerest looking mud-dauber of a lawyer or doctor—or maybe preacher —sitting on the steps of Mrs. Beaver's boarding-house."—"I saw him, too. He had nice eyes—gray and deep set—and they twinkled as if he were saying, 'Yes, I know I'm a joke of a greenhorn, but I'm human, and I like you, and I'd like you to like me.' "

In towns, even the busiest of them, there is not any too much to talk about. Also, there is always any number of girls and widows sharply on the lookout for bread-winners; and the women easily get the men into the habit of noting and sizing up newly arrived males. No such new arrival, whether promising as a provider or not, escapes searching attention. Certainly there

was in young George Helm's appearance no grace or beauty to detain the professional glance of a husband-seeker with a fancy for romantic ornamentation of the business of matrimony. Certainly also there was in that appearance no suggestion of latent possibilities of luxury-providing. A plain, serious-looking young man with darkish hair and a red beard, with a big loosely jointed body whose legs and arms seemed unduly long. A strong, rather homely face, stern to sadness in repose, flashing unexpectedly into keen appreciation of wit and fun when the chance offered. The big hands were rough from the toil of the fields —so rough that they would remain the hands of the manual laborer to the end. The cheap, smooth frock suit and the not too fresh top hat had the air of being their wearer's only costume, of having long served in that capacity, of getting the most

prudent care because they could not soon be relieved of duty.

"He lives in the room my boy Tom made out of the attic last summer," said Mrs. Beaver, who supported her husband and children by taking in boarders. "And all he brung with him was in a paper shirt box. He wears a celluloid collar and cuffs, and he sponges off his coat and vest and pants every morning before he puts 'em on. So Tom says. He lies awake half the night reading or writing in bed—sometimes when he reads he laughs out loud, so you'd think he had company. And he sings hymns and recites poetry. And, my! how he does eat! Them long legs of his'n is hollow clear down."

There is no doubt about the red beard. Since George Helm has become famous, the legend is that he always had a smooth face. But like most of the legends about him—

like that about his astonishing success and astounding marriage—this legend of the smooth face is as falsely inaccurate as most of the stuff that passes for truth about the men of might who have come up from the deep obscurity of the masses. It was a hideous red beard—of the irritating shade of bright red with which brick walls used to be—perhaps in some parts of the world still are—painted in the spring. It grew patchily. In spots it was straight; in other spots, curly. It was so utterly out of harmony with his hair that opinion divided as to which was dyed, and the wonder grew that he did not dye both to some common and endurable shade.

"What does he wear those whiskers for?"—"How can a man with hair like that on his face expect to get clients or anything else?" Nevertheless, public opinion—which is usually wrong about everything, includ-

ing its own exaggerated esteem for itself—was wrong in this case. As soon as a comet ceases to be a visitor and settles down into a fixed inhabitant with a regular orbit it ceases to attract attention, becomes obscure, acquires the dangerous habit of obscurity. George Helm, only twenty-four years old and without money, friends or influence, might have been driven back to the farm but for that beard.

Successful men feed their egotism with such shallow and silly old proverbial stuff as, "You can't keep a good man down," and "A husky hog will get its nose to the trough." But they reckon ill who leave circumstance out of account in human affairs. And circumstance does not mean opportunity seen and seized, but opportunity that takes man by the nape of the neck and forcibly thrusts him into responsibility and painfully compels him to acquire the education

that finally leads to success. Those who arrive forget that they were not always wise and able; they forget how hardly they got wisdom and capacity, how fiercely their native human inertia and stupidity fought against learning. If some catastrophe—which God forbid!—should wipe out at a stroke all our leaders—all the geniuses who give us employment, run our affairs, write our books and newspapers, make our laws, blow the whistles for us to begin and to stop work, tell us when to go forth and when to come in out of the rain—if some cataclysm should orphan us entirely of these our wondrous wise guardians, don't you suspect that circumstance would almost overnight create a new set for us, quite as good, perhaps better? The human race is a vast reservoir of raw material for any and all human purposes. Let those who find cheer in feeling lonely in their unique, inborn, in-

evitable greatness enjoy themselves to their fill. It is their privilege. But it is also the privilege of plain men and twinkling stars to laugh at them.

So, George Helm's beard may have had more to do with his destiny than his conventional biographers will ever concede. He ceased to be a comet. But he did not cease to attract attention. And his awkwardness, his homeliness and his solitary "statesman's" suit would not have sufficed to keep him in the public eye. That preposterous beard was vitally necessary. It accomplished its mission. The months—the clientless months—the months of dwindling purse and hope passed. George Helm remained a figure in Harrison. Some men were noted for the toilets or the eccentricity or the beauty of their wives, some men for their fortunes or their fine houses, some men for dog or horse or high power automobile.

BEHIND THE BEARD

George Helm was noted for his beard. It served as the gathering center for jokes and stories. The whole town knew all sorts of gossip about that "boy with the whiskers," for, through the carmine mask, the boyishness had finally been descried. The local papers, hard put for matter to fill the space round patent medicine advertisements and paid news of dry goods, overshoes and canned vegetables at cut prices, often made paragraphs about the whiskers. And the heartiest laugh at these jests came from serious, studious George Helm himself.

"Why don't you shave 'em, George?"—He was of those men whom everybody calls by the first name.

"You never happened to see me without 'em?" Helm would reply.

"I'd like to," was usually the retort.

"Well, I've seen myself without 'em—

and I guess I'm choosing the bluntest horn of the dilemma."

It never occurred to anyone in Harrison to wonder why, while George Helm's whiskers were a butt, the young man himself was not. When Rostand made a tragic hero of a man with a comic nose, there was much outcry at the marvelous genius displayed in the feat. In fact, that particular matter required no genius at all. There is scarcely an individual of strongly marked personality who has not some characteristic, mental or physical, that is absurd, ridiculous. Go over the list of great men, past and present; note the fantastic, grotesque physical peculiarities alone. Those attention-arresting peculiarities helped, you will observe, not hindered, the man in coming into his own—the pot-belly of little Napoleon, the duck legs of giant Washington, the drooling and twitching of Sam Johnson.

Try how you will, you cannot make a man ridiculous, unless he is ridiculous. Lincoln could—and did—play the clown hours at a time. Yet only shallow fools of conventionality-worshipers for an instant confused the man and the clever story-actor. Harrison laughed at George Helm's whiskers; but it did not, because it could not, laugh at George Helm.

But, being a shallow-pated town, Harrison fancied it was laughing at Helm himself. It is the habit of human beings to mistake clothes and whiskers and all manner of mere externals for men. Occasionally they discover their mistake. Harrison discovered its mistake.

It nominated George Helm for Circuit Judge. There were two parties in that district—as there are everywhere else—the Republican and the Democratic. There was also—as wherever else there is any pub-

lic thing to steal—a third party that owned and controlled the other two. Sometimes this third party "fixes" the race so that Republican always wins and Democrat always loses; again, it "fixes" the race the other way; yet again—where there is what is known as an "intelligent and alert electorate"—this shrewd third party alternately puppets Republican and Democrat first under the wire—and then how the aforesaid intelligent and alert people do shout and applaud their own sagacity and independence!

They say that woman is lacking in the sense of humor. There must be something in the charge. Otherwise, would she not long ago have laughed herself to death at the political antics of man?

In Harrison and its surrounding country the sentiment was overwhelmingly Republican—which meant that the majority of the

"independent" farmers and artisans who were working early and late to enrich the Railway Trust, the Harvester Trust, the Beef Trust, the Money Trust, and the rest of the members of the third and only real party, said, when they sat doddering about politics, "Wall, I reckon I'll keep on voting as I shot." If the community had been Democratic, the dodder would have been, "I think it's about time to turn the rascals out." Needless to say, the third party cares not a rap which side wins. The vote goes into the ballot box Republican or Democratic; it is counted for the third party. In Harrison the Republican candidates of the third party always won, and its Democratic candidates were put up simply to make things interesting for the populace and to give them the feeling that they were sovereign citizens. The Republican candidate for Circuit Judge, the candidate slated

to win in a walk, was Judge Powers. He had served two terms, to the entire content of the third party—and, being full of pious talk and solemn flapdoodle about the "sacredness of the judicial trust in a community of freemen," to the entire content of the people. In a hilarious mood the Democratic machine, casting about for its sacrifice candidate, nominated George Helm—or, rather, George Helm's whiskers.

It was a side-splitting joke. Everybody liked George. Everybody knew about his whiskers—knew him by his whiskers. It bade fair to inject that humor, so dearly beloved of the American people, into what was usually a dull campaign. The only trouble was that for the first time Helm failed to see a joke.

The night of his nomination the light in Mrs. Beaver's tiny, stuffy attic room went out early. And if you could have looked in,

you would have discovered, by the starlight that the big form was lying quite still in the little bed which sagged and bulged with it. But George Helm was not asleep. He slept not a wink that whole night. And as soon as he had finished breakfast he went down to the barber shop at the corner.

"Bob," said he to the colored proprietor, "I want a clean shave."

"What's that, Mr. Helm?" exclaimed the amazed barber. And two loungers at the table where the sporting papers were spread out sat up and stared.

"A clean shave, Bob," said Helm gravely, seating himself in the chair.

Bob started a broad grin that, with the least encouragement, would have become a guffaw—and would have echoed throughout the district. But he did not get the encouragement. Instead, he saw something in

the kind, deep-set gray eyes, in the strong, sad mouth and chin, that set him soberly to work. The two loungers went outside to laugh and spread the news. But when they got outside they did not laugh. Why? It is impossible to explain the psychology of man the mass. They put the astounding news into currency—but not as a joke. Helm was shaving his beard. What did it mean?

"Our opponents," said Judge Powers, "nominated a set of whiskers. The whiskers have disappeared—so there is no one running against us."

The jest, being of the species which it is conventional to utter and to laugh at on stump and after-dinner occasions, got its momentary due of cackling and braying. But the mirth did not spread. For, before noon of that first day of the campaign, it had been discovered that the Democratic

machine had not nominated whiskers, but a man.

We are in the habit of regarding a human being as a mere conglomerate of sundry familiar conventionalities — of dress, of manner, of thought. We have formed the habit because with an occasional rare exception a human being is simply that and nothing more. So an individuality is always a startling apparition—fascinating, perhaps, certainly terrifying. The coming of a man makes us suddenly aware how few real men there are—real live men—how most of us are simply patterns of men who once lived, or, rather, differently proportioned composites of all past men. The excitement in peaceful Harrison and its somnolent environs was almost hysterical. For, in all that region, there was not, there had not been for years—not since the stern, elemental pioneer days—a real living man.

All the specimens of the genus homo were of the approved type of the past.

George Helm, *man*.

"George," said Bill Desbrough, who had a law office across the hall in the same building—the Masonic Temple—"George, where'd you ever get the notion of those there whiskers you've just shed?"

"Oh, the girls," replied George. "When I was a boy and a youngster the girls made fun of my face. So I hid it as soon as I could—as well as I could."

"The fool women!" exclaimed Desbrough in disgust. "Why, George, you've got a *face.*"

"I'm afraid so," said George with a rueful grin, passing his hand over the newly emerged visage.

"Afraid so!" cried Desbrough. "Let me tell you, old man, a face—a real face—is about the rarest thing in the world. Most

so-called faces are nothing but front sides of heads." Desbrough looked at the "face" narrowly, searchingly. "Helm, I believe you are a great man."

George laughed delightedly and derisively—as a sensible man does at a compliment. "Oh, shucks!" said he.

"Anyhow," said Desbrough, "if you'd have produced that face a day earlier, you'd never have got the nomination. A man with a face never gets anything from the powers-that-be, without a fight, until he has put himself squarely on record as being with them. Even then they're always a little afraid of him." Desbrough nodded thoughtfully. "And they may well be, damn 'em," he added.

"Well—I've got the nomination," said Helm.

"I wonder what you'll do with it," said his friend.

"*I'm* wondering what it'll do with *me,*" replied Helm.

Desbrough glanced at him curiously.

George went on to explain. "Yesterday," said he, "I was a boy of twenty-five"——

"Is that all you are!" cried Desbrough. "Why, even without the whiskers I'd have said thirty-five."

"Oh, I'm one of those chaps who are born old," laughed Helm. "I had lines and even wrinkles when I was eighteen. I'll look younger at forty than I do now. Mother used to say I reminded her of her father—that he was homely enough to stop a clock when he was young and kept getting handsomer as he got older."

"I know the kind," said Bill Desbrough, "and it's the best kind to be."

"As I was saying," proceeded George, "yesterday I was a boy. As soon as those fellows nominated me—they were laughing

—they thought it was a fine old joke—but, Bill, a queer sort of a something happened inside me. A kind of shock, like a man jumping out of a sound sleep to find the house afire."

Desbrough was interestedly watching the face of his friend. Its expression was indeed strange—the look of power—sad, stern, inexorable—the look of the men whose wills and passions hurl them on and on to the conquest of the world. Suddenly it changed, softened. The human lines round the mobile, handsome mouth appeared. The gray eyes twinkled and danced. "So you see, Bill," said he, "the nomination didn't lose any time in beginning to do things to me."

"And the whiskers?"

"Oh, they had to go," said George simply. "The fight was on, and a fellow naturally throws away all the foolishness before he jumps in."

"So you're going to make a fight?"

"Of course," said George. "What else is there to do?"

"But you can't win."

"You mean I can't lose. I've got nothing *to* lose."

About the most dangerous character on this earth is a real man who has nothing to lose. When the powers-that-be discover such an one, and are convinced that he is indeed a real man and not a cunning bluff at it, they hasten to give him something to lose. They don't feel safe until he has wife and children, or wealth, or position—something that will fill one arm and make the other cautious.

The three counties constituting that judicial district will not in many a year forget the first Helm campaign. In its second week Judge Powers canceled his speaking dates, giving out that he regarded it as un-

dignified for a judge to descend in the ermine to the political arena and scramble and tussle for votes. The truth was that George Helm had driven him to cover because he dared not face the facts of his judicial record as the young candidate proclaimed it throughout those counties, on the highways, in the by-ways no less, in town, in village, in country.

The day he began campaigning George counted his cash, found that in all the world he had three hundred and forty-seven dollars and fifty-six cents. He had been calculating that this money would keep him housed and fed and officed for about a year longer, assuming that he continued to be absolutely without clients. Then—he would teach school and toss hay and stack sacks at the threshing machine until he had put by the money for another two years' try. To go into the campaign meant to use up his

resources in two months—for he could not hope to get any help from the Democratic machine. Its "contributions" from the various corporations would be used in paying the leaders and their henchmen for refraining from "doing anything disturbing."

"Sorry, Mr. Helm," said Pat Branagan, the local Democratic boss, "but we can't spare you a cent for your campaign."

"So I calculated," said Helm.

Branagan had changed toward Helm the instant he saw him without a beard. Branagan had not risen to be boss without learning a thing or two about human nature and human faces. "There's no hope for you," proceeded he. "And anyhow I think a judicial candidate ought to be dignified."

"Oh, I don't see any objection to his showing himself to the people," said George, "and letting them judge whether he's honest and sensible, and letting them

hear what his notion of justice is—whether he's for rich man's reading of the law or for honest man's reading of it."

Branagan puffed thoughtfully at his cigar. If he had been looking at Helm, he might have seen a covert twinkle in those expressive gray eyes. But he was not looking at Helm; he didn't like to look at him. "Yes, I suppose so, Mr. Helm," he said. He had called Helm George—George, with a humorous grin—until Bob Williams, the colored barber, performed that magic feat. "But there won't be no money for meetings. Meetings means hall rent and posters and processions, and them little knickknacks costs."

"I guess I can look after that," said George, crossing and uncrossing his long legs and smoothing out a tail of his shiny black frock upon his knee.

"You allow to do some speaking?"

"I'm going to hire a horse and buggy and move about some."

"That's good. You may stir up a little law business."

"Maybe so."

"Done any orating?"

"Oh, I've heard a lot of speeches, and I've made a few."

"Then you know the kind of stuff to hand out to the people."

"I guess so," said Helm.

Branagan was obviously relieved when Helm departed—the conference was held in Pat's saloon which was the "hang-out" for the politicians and other disreputables of the town. The first class really included the last, for there was not a disreputable who was not actively engaged in "practical" politics. Helm negotiated with the livery-man round the corner from Mrs. Beaver's boarding-house, got a buggy and a sound

horse for two months at two dollars and a half a day, he to feed the horse, keep the buggy in repair and do his own driving. The morning of the second day after he secured the nomination, he opened his campaign.

Two days later—or rather, three nights later—so far into the third night that it was near the dawn of the third day—a stalled automobile shot the powerful beams from its acetylene lamps into the woods near Bixby Cross Roads, about twenty miles to the northeast of Harrison. The light fell upon a buggy, with the horse taken from the shafts and hitched to a nearby tree.

"Hi, there—I say!" came in a man's voice from the darkness of the auto.

This was followed a moment later by, "Well, I'll be jiggered!" in the same voice, accompanied by the subdued laughter of two women, on the rear seat of the auto.

The cause of the exclamation was the apparition of a head above the side of the bed of the buggy, and behind the seat—the head of a man.

"Why, he's curled up in his buggy to sleep," said one of the women in a low voice.

But the night was still and the voice had the carrying quality; so George Helm heard distinctly. As he was as shy as any man is apt to be who feels that he is not attractive to women, the sound of a woman's voice—a young woman's voice—threw him into a panic. He was acutely conscious of the fact that the frock suit neatly folded was under the buggy seat, and that he had nothing on over his underclothes but the lap robe. In his alarm he cried out, "Don't come any nearer. What do you want to know?"

"We've punctured a tire," said the man.

"And we've lost our way. Will you come and help me?"

"Turn those lights the other way," said Helm.

There was a chuckle from the direction of the auto, a sound of suppressed female laughter. The sound rose, swelled until the two women and their man and presently George Helm were all four laughing uproariously. The lights turned in another direction. "Thanks," said Helm. "I'll be with you in a minute."

And it was scarcely more than that when he, clad in the frock suit and carrying the top hat in his hand, advanced toward the auto. "Now—what can I do for you?" inquired he.

"Do you know how to fit on a tire?" said the man—he was young, about George's age—but a person of fashionable dress and manner.

"I don't know a thing about automobiles," replied Helm.

"But I do, Bart," said one of the women —the one with the sweeter voice. "I can superintend."

"Are we far from the main road?" said Bart to Helm.

"About a mile and a half."

"I'm sorry to disturb you. I'm Barton Hollister."

The young man spoke the name as if he were certain of its being recognized. "Oh, yes, I know you, Mr. Hollister. We come from the same town—Harrison. I'm George Helm."

"I've heard of you," said young Hollister graciously. "I suppose we've never happened to meet because I'm at home so little. You've lost your way, too?"

"No, I'm making a campaign through the district."

"Oh—yes. You were nominated by the Democrats for—for——"

Mr. Hollister hesitated awkwardly. "For Circuit Judge," Helm supplied.

"Against my cousin, Judge Powers. These ladies are my sister Clara and Miss Clearwater."

Helm bowed to the ladies, who smiled graciously at him. He could see their faces now—lovely, delicate faces with the look of the upper class—the sort of women he had seen only at a distance and had met only in novels and memoirs.

"The chauffeur was sick and I was ass enough to risk coming without him," said Hollister. "Nell, you'll have to tell us what to do."

There followed about the most interesting and exciting hour of George Helm's life up to that time. Within five minutes Barton Hollister had shown that he was worse than

useless for the work in hand, had been swept aside by Helm and Miss Clearwater. He smoked and fussed about and quarreled with his sister, who was in no very good humor with him—"casting us away in the wilderness at three o'clock in the morning." Helm and the girl who knew toiled at removing the tire and replacing it. She did not know very much; so in the end Helm became boss and, with her assistance, worked out the problem from its foundations.

It isn't easy for an intelligent human being to say so much as three sentences without betraying his intelligence. And in an emergency the evidences of superior mind stand out clearly and brilliantly. Thus it came to pass that in the hour's work George Helm and Eleanor Clearwater got a respect each for the other's intelligence. His respect for her was so great that he all but

forgot her loveliness and her remote removal from the sphere of his humble, toilsome life. He was tempted to prolong the task, in spite of the irritation of Clara Hollister's railing, peevish voice. But he resisted the temptation and got his visitors into condition for departure with all the speed he could command.

They thanked him effusively. There was handshaking all round. Hollister and his sister urged him to call "soon"—a diplomatic invitation; it sounded cordial, yet—was safely vague. The automobile departed, and the candidate for judge was free to resume his repose in the airy chamber he had selected, to save time and hotel bills.

Two hours later he made a thorough toilet with the assistance of a convenient spring, hitched up his horse and drove out of the woods and into the by-road to search for a farm-house and breakfast. After

about a mile, and just before he reached the main road, he saw ahead of him an auto—the auto. In his shyness he reined in his horse and looked round for some way to escape. He, the homely, the obscure, the wretchedly poor, the badly dressed, the grotesque struggler for a foothold in life—"as ridiculous as a turtle on its back and trying to get right side up"—what had he to do with those rich, grand, elegant people? When they saw him in the full light of day, needing a shave and none too tidy after his interrupted night out, they would humiliate him with their polite but not to be concealed disdain of him. Bart Hollister suddenly sprang from the auto and shouted and waved. There was nothing to do but go on.

Another tire had exploded, and Bart had not dared leave the two girls alone; besides, he would have been lost the instant he got

beyond the range of the lights. "We've been dozing in the car and hoping you'd come along," he ended. "I'll bet you're cursing the day you ever saw us. But—couldn't you help put on another tire?"

A few minutes, and Helm and Eleanor Clearwater were at work again. But his fingers were much clumsier now, and he was wretchedly self-conscious. By daylight he saw her to be the loveliest woman—so he decided—that he had ever seen. About twenty years old, with thick hair of the darkish neutral shade that borrows each moment new colors and tints from the light; with very dark gray eyes, so dark that an observer less keen than Helm might have thought them brown. She was neither tall nor short, had one of those figures that make you forget inches, and think only of line and proportion. A good straight nose, a sweet yet rather haughty mouth. Her

hands—he noted them especially as he and she worked—were delicate, had a singular softness that somehow contrived to combine with firmness. They were cool to the touch—and her voice was cool, even when talking intimately with Clara Hollister and her brother. Not the haughty reserve of caste, but the attractive human reserve of those to whom friendship and love are not mere words but deep and lasting emotions.

When he took off his coat to go to work Helm was so thoroughly flustered that he did not think of his linen—or rather, of his cotton and celluloid—or of the torn back of his waistcoat, or of the discolored lining of his coat. But when he was ready to resume the coat he suddenly saw and felt all these horrors of his now squalid poverty. She was apparently unaware; but he knew that she too had seen, had felt. Unconsciously he looked at her with a humble yet proud

appeal—the effort the soul sometimes makes to face directly another soul, with no misleading veil of flesh and other externals between. Their eyes met; she colored faintly and glanced away.

Clara and Barton were for dashing straight on home to breakfast—a run of about three-quarters of an hour. But Miss Clearwater was not for the risk. "I'm starved," said she. "I've worked hard, with these two tires. Mr. Helm will find us breakfast in this neighborhood."

"I was going to ask them to give me something at Jake Hibbard's, about half a mile further on," said Helm. "It'll be plain food, but pretty good."

And it was pretty good—coffee, fresh milk, corn bread, fried chicken and potatoes, corn cakes and maple syrup. Barton and Clara ate sparingly. It made George Helm feel closer to the goddess to see that

she ate as enthusiastically as did he. "I never saw you eat like this, Nell," said Clara, not altogether admiring.

"You never saw me when I had things I really liked," replied she.

"The way to get your food to be really tasty," observed Mrs. Hibbard, "is to earn it."

Miss Clearwater deigned to be interested in Mr. Helm's campaign. "I know something about politics," said she. "My father was United States Senator a few years ago."

"Oh—you're George Clearwater's daughter?" said Helm. He knew all about Clearwater, the lumber "king" who had bought a seat in the Senate because his wife thought she'd like Washington socially.

"Yes," said the girl. "I'm the only child. And you—are you going to be elected?"

"Judge Powers's plurality was more than his opponent's whole vote last time," said Helm.

"Then you haven't much hope?"

"I don't hope—I work," said Helm.

As they talked on, he saying nothing beyond what was necessary to answer the questions put to him, it was curious to see how he, the homely and the shabby, became the center of interest. His personality compelled them to think and to talk about him, to revolve round him—this, though he was shrinking in his shyness and could scarcely find words or utterance for them.

"What a queer man," said Clara, when the auto was under way again. "He's very dowdy and ugly, but somehow you sort of like him."

"He's not so ugly," said Miss Clearwater.

"Perhaps not—for a man of his class," said Clara. "I like to meet the lower class

people once in awhile. They're very interesting."

"I guess," said Miss Clearwater, absently, "that father was a good deal that sort of a man when he was young."

Clara laughed. "Oh, nonsense," she cried. "Your father amounted to something."

"He started as a pack peddler."

Clara would not be outdone in generous candor. "Well—papa was a farm hand. Don't all that sort of thing seem terribly far away, Nell? Just look at *us*. Think of *us* marrying a man like this Helm."

Miss Clearwater shivered. "He was pretty dreadful—wasn't he?"

"I don't suppose the poor fellow ever had a decent suit in his life—or ever before met ladies."

"Yet," said Miss Clearwater, absent and

reflective, "there's no telling what he'll be, before he gets through."

"Talking about your conquest, Nell?" called Bart from the front seat.

Miss Clearwater colored haughtily. Clara cried, "Don't be rude, Bart."

"Rude?" retorted Hollister. "Anyone could see with half an eye that he was overhead in love with Nell. Wait till he comes to call."

"Call?" Clara laughed. "He'd never venture to appear at our front door."

"We'll go to hear him when he strikes Harrison," said Bart.

"Indeed we'll not," replied his sister. "He'd misunderstand and presume. Don't you think so, Nell?"

"Yes," replied Miss Clearwater promptly —too promptly.

But long before Helm and his campaign reached Harrison there were other reasons

why the Hollisters, indeed all the "best people," could not show themselves at a Helm meeting.

The ignorance of the mass of mankind has made government an arrangement whereunder the many labor for the prosperity of the few. The pretexts for this scheme and the devices for carrying it out have varied; but the scheme itself has not varied—and will not vary until the night of ignorance and the fog of prejudice shall have been rolled away. All things considered, it is most creditable to human nature and most significant of the moral power of enlightenment, that the intelligent few have dealt so moderately with their benighted fellows and have worked so industriously to end their own domination by teaching their servitors the way of emancipation; for let it not be forgotten that the light comes only from above, that the man who

has emancipated himself could always, if he chose, be oppressor. Our modern American version of this ancient scheme of the few exploiting the many consists of two essential parts—laws cunningly designed to enable the few to establish their toll gates upon every road of labor; courts shrewdly officered so that the judges can, if they will, issue the licenses for the aforesaid toll gates, which are not as a rule established, but simply permitted, by the law. The treacherous legislator enacts the slyly worded authorization; the subservient judge—no, rather, the judge chosen from, and in sympathy with, the dominant class —reads the permissive statute as mandatory.

This primer lesson in politics, known to all men who have opportunity to learn and who see fit to seize the opportunity, was of course known to George Helm. But he did

not content himself with a dry, tiresome, "courteous" statement of the fact. He brought it home to the people of those three counties by showing precisely what Judge Powers had done in his seven years as the people's high officer of justice—by relating in detail the favors he had granted to the railways, both steam and trolley, to the monopolies in every necessity of life. He also gave an account of Judge Powers's material prosperity, his rapid rise to riches in those seven years, and the flourishing condition of his relatives and intimate friends, the men owning stock in the railway and other monopolies. In a word, the young candidate made what is known as a "blatherskite" campaign. In his youth and simplicity he imagined that, as a candidate, it was his duty to tell the truth to the people. He did not know the difference between the two kinds of truth—decent and

indecent—decent truth that gives everybody a comfortable sense of general depravity, and indecent truth that points out specific instances of depravity, giving names, dates and places.

"Let those who will benefit by Judge Powers's notion of justice and law vote for him," said Helm. "I ask those who will benefit by my notion of law and justice to vote for me."

The Democratic machine hastened to disavow Helm's plainness of speech. The newspapers, Democratic no less than Republican, ignored him. But the scandal would not down. The news of Helm's charges—of his unparliamentary statements of fact—spread from village to village, from farm to farm. Within a week it was no longer necessary for him to distribute handbills and call at farm-houses to announce his meetings. Wherever he went he

found a crowd waiting to hear his simple conversational appeal to common-sense—and, after hearing, bursting into cheers. In private, in handshaking and talking with the farmers and villagers, he was all humor, full of homely, witty stories and jests. But the moment he stood up as the candidate addressing the people, the face lost its humor lines, the eyes their twinkle, and he uttered one plain, serious sentence after another, each making a point against Judge Powers.

The strong homely face grew rapidly thinner. The deep-set gray eyes sank still deeper beneath the overhanging brows. As for the frock suit, it soon became a wretched exhibit from a rag bag. The "respectable" people—that is, those owning the stocks and bonds of Judge Powers's protégé companies—laughed at the fantastic figure, roving about in the mud-stained buggy.

But—"the common people heard him gladly."

After six weeks of campaigning with farmers and villagers, Helm felt strong enough to attack the fortress—Harrison. There are those in Harrison who can still tell in minutest detail of the coming of Helm—driving slowly, toward mid-day, down the main street—the direct way to Mrs. Beaver's boarding-house. The top hat was furry and dusty. The black frock suit was streaked and stained, was wrinkled and mussed. The big shoulders drooped wearily. But the powerful head was calmly erect, and there was might in the great, toil-scarred hands that held the reins on the high bony knees.

Not in the worst days of the whiskers had George Helm been so ludicrous to look at. But no one laughed. The crowds along

the sidewalks gazed in silence and awe. 'A *man* had come to town.

That afternoon he spoke in Court House square—that afternoon, and again after supper, and twice every day for a week. Never had there been such crowds at political meetings—and, toward the last, never such enthusiasm. The suddenness, the strangeness of the attack paralyzed the opposition. It accepted Judge Powers's dignified suggestion—"the fellow is beneath contempt, is unworthy of notice."

At the end of the week, off went George to the sparser regions again, repeating the queer triumph of his first tour. 'And every one was asking every one else, What are the people going to do? Reichman, the Republican boss, put this question to Democratic boss Branagan when they met a few evenings before the election on the neutral

ground of Tom Duffy's saloon and oyster parlor.

"What do you think the people are going to do?" asked Reichman.

"Dun' no," said Branagan. "But I know what *I'm* goin' to do."

This, with a wicked grin and a wink. Said Reichman, "Me, too, Pat."

And they did it. Not a difficult thing to do at any election, for the people know little about election machinery, and do not watch —indeed, what would the poor blind, ignorant creatures find out if they did watch? Yes, Reichman and his Democratic partner did it. The easiest thing in the world, when the machinery of both parties is in the same hands.

The country went strongly for Helm. But Harrison and the three other towns of the district more than "saved the day for the sanctity of the ermine and the politics

of gentlemen." Judge Powers was re-elected by an only slightly reduced plurality. Helm had polled three times as many votes as any Democratic candidate ever had. But the famous "silent, stay-at-home voter" had come forth and had saved the republic. That famous retiring patriot!—so retiring that the census men cannot find him and the undertaker never buries him. But no matter. He is our greatest patriot. He always appears when his country needs him.

No one saw Helm on election night. At Mrs. Beaver's it was said that he had gone to bed at the usual time. Next day he appeared, looking much as usual. The gray eyes were twinkling; the humorous lines round the mouth were ready for action. He went to see Branagan at the saloon. They sat down to a friendly glass of beer.

"Well, Mr. Helm," said Branagan, "you lost."

"The election—yes," said Helm.

"Everything," said Branagan.

"Oh, no," replied George softly. "Next time I may win."

Branagan's hard blue eyes looked straight into Helm's. Said he: "There ain't goin' to be no next time—fur you."

Helm returned the gaze. "Yes, there is, Pat," said he.

"Goin' to make a livin', practicin' before Judge Powers—eh?"

"No. I'm going up the State to teach school. But I'm coming back."

"Oh—hell," said Pat Branagan—a jeer, but an ill-tempered one.

On his way uptown again George Helm almost walked into Eleanor Clearwater and Clara Hollister. He lifted his hat and bowed, blushing deeply. The two girls looked past him. Clara seemed unconscious that he was there; Eleanor slightly

inclined her head—a cold, polite acknowledgment of the salute of a mistaken stranger.

Helm put on the frayed and frowzled top hat. His embarrassment left him. With a sweet and simple smile of apology that made the strong homely face superbly proud, he strode erectly on.

II

THE CAT'S-PAW

PAT BRANAGAN, Democratic boss of Harrison, had said to George Helm, his defeated nominee for circuit judge: "There ain't goin' to be no next time—fur you." He had said this in circumstances of extreme provocation. The young candidate, nominated as a joke, nominated to help the Republican machine roll up a "monumental majority" for Judge Powers, judicial agent of the interests owning both party machines—the young candidate had made a house to house, stump to stump campaign, had exposed Judge Powers, had forced both machines to commit wholesale election frauds to prevent his de-

feat. But Mr. Branagan's anger had not been the real cause of his serving notice on the big, homely young lawyer that he would never get another nomination from the Democratic party of the city of Harrison. Mr. Branagan did not conduct his life with his temper. If he had done so, he would not have become boss, but would have remained a crumb-fed private. He had reasons—reasons of sound business sense—for "double crossing" George Helm. The Helm sort of Democrat, attacking corruption, smashing at the Republican machine, rousing the people to suspect and to reflect and to revolt, was a dangerous menace to the Branagan income.

"He's one of them there damned agitators that's bad for business," said Mr. Branagan to his friend and partner, the Republican boss. "Everything's running quiet and smooth here, and the people's satisfied.

If that fellow had his way, they'd be attendin' to politics instead of to their jobs."

"That's right," said Reichman. "My people"—meaning the corporations whose political agent he was—"my people understand you didn't intend to do it. They look to you to get rid of him." Reichman said "my people" rather than "your people," because Republican partisans being overwhelmingly in the majority in that district, the interests had him for chief political manager, and dealt with the Democratic boss only through him. If Reichman had been strictly accurate he would not have said "my people," but *"the* people"; for the interests are the only people who have not power in politics.

"Helm's leaving, all right," said Branagan. "That there campaign of his used up his money. He never had no law business, and he's smart enough to know he'll never

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get none hereabouts, so long as Powers is on the bench. So he's gone up the State to teach school."

"Well, that's the last of *him,*" said Reichman. "I'm kind of sorry for him, Pat. He's a damn nice young fellow."

"Yes—and a mighty good stumper, too." With a grin, "He landed on your friend the Judge—jaw, solar plexus, kidneys—had him groggy."

The two bosses laughed uproariously. Then Branagan said: "Yes, George Helm's a nice boy. But I don't like him. If he'd a won out, he'd a made it hot for me—and for you, too."

"But he didn't," said Reichman. "And he's all in. I can think well of the dead."

"I don't like him," growled Branagan. "He fooled me with those crazy red whiskers of his. I knew what he was the first time I saw him after he cut 'em off—that

was the day after I put him on the ticket. When a man fools me, he makes me mad."

"He fooled everybody," said Reichman soothingly. "And as it has turned out there's no harm done. The way we made him walk the plank'll be a warning to any other young smart Alecks there are in these parts, thinking of upsetting things."

It certainly looked as if George Helm were dead and done for in that community. But Patrick Branagan was a sensible man. Vain men concern themselves about likes and dislikes; sensible men, about advantages and disadvantages. It came to pass in that winter, while George Helm was teaching school up the State, and saving money for another attempt as a lawyer, Branagan and Reichman fell out about the division of the graft. Branagan was a slow thinker, but it gradually penetrated to him

that in George Helm he had a threat wherewith he could, or, rather, should, extort for himself a larger share of the spoils. Helm, making a single-handed campaign against both machines—for the Branagan machine had repudiated him—had carried the district, had been kept out of office only by the most barefaced frauds in Harrison and the three large towns. So Branagan told Reichman that unless his share—in the vice money, in the "campaign contributions" and in the contracts—were raised to an equality with Reichman's own share, he would bring Helm back. Reichman laughed, Branagan insisted. Reichman grew insulting. Branagan presented an ultimatum. Reichman answered by cutting Branagan's third to a fourth.

In May Branagan went up to Mrs. Beaver's boarding house. Yes, Mr. Helm had left his address. "And," said Mrs. Beaver,

"he sends me regular his rent for the room he had."

"What does he do that for?" said Branagan.

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Beaver. "He was mighty queer in lots of ways. No, I can't nohow work it out why he sends me the two dollars a week—and him so poor he had to do his own washing and mending—and wore celluloid."

But Branagan knew, on second thought. So the young damn fool did intend to come back—had kept his legal residence in Harrison. Though this news was altogether satisfactory to Branagan's plans, it gave him a qualm. What a stubborn, *dangerous* chap this boy was! However—his fear of Helm was vague and remote, his need of him clear and near. He took the midnight express for the north and was at George Helm's boarding house on the lake front at

Saskaween as George, with breakfast finished and his cigar lighted, was starting out for a stroll.

"I'll go along," said Pat. "Throw away that cigar and let me give you a good one."

"If it's like the one you're smoking," said George, "it's not good. But it's better than my five-center."

"I pay a quarter apiece for my cigars," said Branagan. "And I think I know a good cigar."

"You think it's good because Len Melcher charges you a quarter for it," replied Helm.

"What do you know about good cigars, anyhow?" said Branagan, ruffled that this poor school teacher should presume to be critical.

Helm might have explained that he happened to be one of those people who are born with intensely acute senses—eyes that

see, ears that hear, nerves of touch, taste and smell that respond where the ordinary nerve remains inert. But he contented himself with a good-natured laugh and a cheerful, "Where's the cigar? And what do you want, Pat?"

Branagan drew the cigar from his well-filled waistcoat pocket. "How'd you like to go to the State Legislature next winter, as Senator from down yonder?" he said.

Helm lit the quarter cigar from his "five-center," strode along in silence beside his shorter and stouter companion. He finally said:

"So you and Reichman have fallen out?"

"Personally, we're friends," replied the Democratic boss with an air of virtue earnest enough, but so grotesque that it did not even seem hypocritical. "But in politics we are and always have been enemies."

Helm's deep-set gray eyes gazed

shrewdly at the heavy red face of the boss. "And," he went on, as if Branagan had not spoken, "you want to use me as a club for bringing him to terms."

"Who's been handing you out that line of dope?" said Branagan noisily.

Helm ignored this blustering bluff as unworthy of reply. He said: "When do you want your answer?"

"I ain't offered you no nomination," protested Branagan angrily. "I just put out a suggestion."

"Oh—you want to make terms?—want to pledge me?—want to see if you can control me?" Helm shook his head and smiled. "Nothing doing, Pat," he said.

"Now, look here, George—why're you so damn suspicious? I'm older'n you and I've been all through the game. Let me tell you, my boy, you're trying to get in the wrong way. There's nothing in that there

end of the game. A fellow who works for the people works for somebody that's got nothing, and is a fool, to boot. Get in right, George. Work for them as can and will do something for you."

"Oh, I'm not thinking of working for the people," replied Helm, amused. "I'm working for myself—for my own amusement. I've made up my mind to have a good time in my life—not what *you'd* call a good time, perhaps, but the kind of a time that suits me. I don't care for money—nor for the things money buys. I rather think the kind of woman I'd want wouldn't want me—so I'm not going to have a wife and family to work for. I've decided to be my own boss—and to do as I damn please."

"You're a queer chap, for sure," said Branagan. "But let me tell you one thing. A man that sets out to do as he pleases has

got to have a lot of money—unless he pleases to be a hobo, or near it. You'd better wait till you've made your pile before you put your nose in the air."

"I've thought of that," said Helm. "Yes, I've got to have money. They can always do me up as long as I'm poor. But I'm going to make it in my own way."

"*I* can help you," said Branagan.

"Yes—you could," admitted Helm.

"You'd not have to touch a cent that wasn't perfectly honest graft."

Helm laughed.

"What's the joke?" demanded Branagan.

"I was thinking how plainly you were showing me your hand. How you must need me to travel clear across the State to see me, and then to talk straight out like this."

Branagan frowned—grinned. "I don't need you any more than you need me,"

retorted he. "Not as bad. How much does this job you've got pay?"

"Sixty-five a month."

"And you an educated man. That was a pretty good hash house you're livin' in."

"Fourth rate. But my bed's clean and the food is good."

"Sixty-five a month! I can put you in the way of makin' that much a day—if you deliver the goods."

"Meaning——"

"If you carry in my ticket next fall—and behave yourself like a sensible man after you get in."

"What was my majority in the district last fall?" Helm suddenly asked.

"About twelve hundred," replied Branagan.

"I thought so," said Helm. "If I'd had five thousand dollars I'd have sent you and

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Reichman to the pen for the frauds. But you knew I'd be helpless."

The Democratic boss gave him an amiable and sympathetic look. Said he: "A man without money is always helpless, George. And the further he goes the surer he is to fall—and fall hard."

"I know. I've got to have enough to make me independent."

"How're you goin' to get it, my boy?"

"That's what I've been trying to figure out," confessed Helm. "Thus far I've not found the answer."

"You'll never find it where you're looking," said Branagan. "The people—they ain't goin' to give it to you. And you ain't goin' to get no law cases unless you're in right. If you did get a good law case, it'd be decided against you."

Helm's expression was admission that the boss was right.

"And," proceeded Branagan, "if you decided to make money by going into business —that's slow, and anyhow you'll have to grâft or you won't make nothin'. I tell you, George—— They call us politicians grafters. But the truth is we're a damn sight honester than the business men or the lawyers—or any other class except them that ain't got no chance to graft. The worst of us ain't no worse than the best of them swell, big-figger grafters like Hollister and Powers. And the best of us is a hell of a sight honester. *We've* got some friendship in us. And I've yet to see the respectable, tony, church-going grafter I'd trust unless I had him in writing. What's the matter nowadays with Al Reichman? Why, as long as he was just a plain low-down politician he kept his word and played square. But now that he's married among the swells and has taken up the respectable end of the

game, he's as crooked as—as Judge Powers."

"I can't make up my mind what to do about Reichman," said Branagan to Helm.

"Haven't you got your orders from the crowd that's behind both of you?" inquired Helm.

"Yes—to let him alone—to let up on him."

"Then—that's what you'll do."

"I suppose so," Branagan reluctantly admitted. "I wisht I was as young as you, George—and had my old-time nerve—and didn't have an expensive family. I'd take a chance."

"Of being able to stay in now that you're in?"

"That's it. Damn it, I sometimes believe we could."

Helm shook his head. "The district is normally seven thousand Republicans out

of a total vote of eighteen thousand. It'd take ten years of hard work—and *honest* politics—to change that round to a small *steady* Democratic plurality."

"But the people are crazy about *you*."

"They won't reëlect me," said Helm. "Next time they'll be back in the harness."

"For a youngster you take a mighty gloomy view of things."

"I don't delude myself. I don't dare. I've been making my own living since I was ten and I've got to go on making it till I die."

"Yes, the people are mutts," said Branagan. "They were born to be trimmed. . . . So—if you was in my place you'd fix up a peace with Reichman?"

"No," said Helm. "*I* shouldn't. But *you* ought to do it. You don't want to make a losing fight for ten years—do you? You

don't want to drop politics as a business, do you?"

"It's a business or it's nothing," replied Branagan.

"For you," corrected Helm.

"For all of them that's in it—except here and there a crank."

"Except here and there a crank," assented Helm.

"Republicans and Democrats—they all belong one way or another to this interest or that. What's the use of fighting the crowd that's got the money? No use—not here in this town—not up to the State capitol, where you're going—not on to Washington where I reckon you calculate to go some day. Not nowhere, George!"

"Not nowhere," said George. "It takes two negatives to give that affirmative its full strength."

"Not nowhere on earth," repeated Brana-

gan. "Fight the money crowd, and sooner or later they'll get you down. Bluff at fightin' 'em. They don't mind that. They understand you've got to keep in with the people, and they want you to, so as you'll be useful. But don't *do* nothing. Look at any of the big politicians that the people think so well of. What have they *done?* Nothing. They've bluffed—and talked—and roared. Maybe they cut off a measly little grafter here or there. But when it came to a show-down, they gave the crowd with the cash what they wanted. Eh?"

Helm nodded.

"Well—what are *you* going to do?"

"I'll see when the time comes. Meantime, what's my cue, Pat? To roar—isn't it?"

Branagan laughed. "And you're the boy that can do it," he cried. "You almost make *me* believe you're in earnest."

Helm gave his political sponsor a queer, quick look. "Almost," he said, with a laugh. "That's good."

"For your age, Helm, you've got the best nut on you of any man I know or know about. I'll back you to win. You'll be the nominee for governor in two years."

"I hope so," said Helm.

"And as soon as I settle things with Reichman I'll give you all the law business you can take care of—good, paying business—the kind that won't hurt you with the people."

"I'll take all of that I can get," said Helm. "I want to make money. I've *got* to make money."

"You've put me in the way of doing better than ever, my boy, and I'm not ungrateful."

George winced. But he laughed and said: "And don't forget, my usefulness has

only begun." He reflected, smiled a peculiar secret smile as he went on: "The people allow the crowd that's robbing them to pay big wages to the politicians who make the robbery possible. Why shouldn't an honest man take away from the robbers a big enough share to keep him going and to put him in a position to serve the people better?"

"That's good sense," said Branagan heartily.

"It's practical," said Helm, staring gloomily.

Branagan observed him with narrowed eyelids and cigar tilted to a high reflective angle. "You're a queer one," he said, at last. "I can't exactly place you."

From time to time Helm had been nodding a thoughtful assent. He now said:

"Last summer and fall I got a lot of experience, Branagan. Ever since, I've

been turning it over in my mind. The time may come when a man can get where he wants to go by a smooth bee line through the air. But not now. Now he has to move along the ground, and the road isn't as straight as it might be, or as smooth. I was all for the bee line through the air. I've found out better." He looked pointedly at his hard-eyed companion. "I haven't changed my *destination,* Pat. You understand?"

Branagan nodded.

"I've simply changed from the heavenly route to the human. And by human I don't mean crooked."

"I understand, Mr. Helm," said Branagan, with the respect a shrewd man cannot but feel in presence of an intelligence that has shown itself the superior of his. "I understand perfectly, George."

"You probably don't understand," said

George. "But no matter. You can be boss of the machine, but you can't be my boss. If you give me the nomination and I'm elected, I'll not attack the—the shortcomings of my friends until I've settled with the crimes of my enemies. I'll not forget that I owe you, and not the people, for the nomination. But neither will I forget that I owe the people, and not you, for the election."

"That's the talk, Helm!" said Branagan, with enthusiasm.

"I'll accept your nomination *if* you make up a good ticket throughout—one that ought to win."

"I've got to do that, George," said the boss. "The Republicans outnumber us three to one. Yes, I'll give you A1 running mates."

"After we've won—you'll have to look out for yourself," pursued Helm. "I'll not

stand *personally* for any crookedness. I don't like it, and I don't think it's good politics."

"I'll nominate you," said Branagan. "And I'll send you a list of the men I pick out to run with you. I'm not a fool, Mr. Helm. I know we can't get in unless we make the people believe we're sincere—and that we can't make 'em believe it unless we put up clean men."

Helm smiled. "Yes—we've got to make a good strong bluff at decency."

Branagan inspected Helm's face with a quick, eager glance—a hopeful glance. Helm laughed at him. Branagan colored.

"I knew you didn't understand," said Helm. "But, as I said before, it doesn't matter. We'll only win the one election. Then the people'll go back to their Republican rut, and in will come Reichman and the old gang again. You calculate that you

can make better terms with him after you've given him a beating. Now, don't you see that it's to your interest to keep me decent —to keep me a scarecrow for Reichman?"

Branagan nodded. "You and me'll have no trouble, George. I'll let you play your game to suit yourself."

Two months later Helm reappeared at Harrison, resumed the lodging at Mrs. Beaver's and the dark and dingy little back office in the Masonic Temple. He was dressed in new clothes—a plain, cheap business suit of dark blue, linen shirt, collars and cuffs, a straw hat. He thought himself a stylish, almost a foppish, person. In fact he seemed hardly less unkempt and ill fitted than he had in the black frock suit and top hat of the previous year. Perhaps—but only perhaps—in the days of the toga George Helm might have looked well in clothes; in modern dress he could not look

well. The most he could do was to look clean and important and strong—and that he certainly did.

Reichman understood, the moment it became known that the young lawyer had as clients four contracting companies in which Pat Branagan was the silent—and sole—partner. Reichman was for making a fight at once. But Judge Powers and Hollister had no fancy for a shower of the shafts which would glance harmlessly from the tough hide of Reichman, but would penetrate their skins and fester in their vanity. "I'll take care of Helm," said Hollister. And he sent his son Bart to call.

"Glad to see you back," said Barton, a dazzling but also an agreeable apparition in the dingy dimness of Helm's office. "We were talking about you only yesterday—I and my sister and Miss Clearwater. You remember her?"

"Yes—I—I remember her," said Helm, as painfully embarrassed as if Miss Eleanor Clearwater, the beautiful, the fashionable, had been there in her own exquisite person. Remember her! Not a day had passed that he had not lived again those hours when chances had thrown him into her company on terms of almost friendly intimacy.

"We want you to come to dinner," continued Barton, pretending not to notice the simple, uncouth, homely Helm's woeful confusion. "To-morrow night—very informal—dressed as you are—really a home supper."

"Sorry, but I can't," George blurted out —curt, rude, uncouth.

"Oh—nonsense!" cried young Hollister. "You'll get along all right."

"I can't come, Mr. Hollister," said George, suddenly recovering his self-possession. Perhaps the fashionable young

man's misunderstanding of his diffidence may have helped. Helm went on with the natural dignity and grace that makes the acquired sort look what it is, "It's very kind of your father and Judge Powers to ask me. But I can't."

"*I'm* asking you," weakly blustered Barton. "My father's got nothing to do with it. As for Judge Powers, I can't see why you drag *him* in."

The calm, honest look of George Helm's deep-set eyes was not easy to bear, as he explained without a trace of anger:

"I met your sister and her friend on the street the day after the election last fall. They made it plain that they had ceased to know me——"

"But," interrupted Bart, "that was the day after the election, when everybody was hot in the collar. We've all cooled down."

"I've come back here to go into politics

again," said George. "And I've got to say and do things that'll make you and your relatives madder than ever——"

"What for?" cried Bart. "I say, Helm, what's the use of being so devilish personal and unpleasant? Why stir things up and make trouble for yourself? Why not join our party and jog along quietly and comfortably?"

Helm laughed good-humoredly. "Let's say it's because I was born a contentious cuss and can't change my nature. No, Hollister—you don't want me at your house."

Hollister was convinced. But his father's orders had been positive, had made no provision for failure. He persisted as best he could: "You can't think we're trying to buy you with a dinner?"

"I think I'm too good-natured not to sell out for a dinner—and that sort of thing—if I put myself in the way of temptation."

"What rot! You'll come? Nell Clearwater will be terribly disappointed. She took quite a shine to you."

George Helm laughed. "I shave myself, Hollister. I see myself every morning. I'm not for the ladies, nor they for me."

"Oh, hell! A woman doesn't care what a man looks like. They'd rather a man wouldn't be handsome, so he'll think about them instead of about himself. The way to please a woman is to help her to think of nothing but herself."

"I'm not a ladies' man," said Helm.

Hollister argued—not unskillfully, because he liked Helm. But George was not to be moved. He had not set out from the depth of the valleys for the heights without so obvious a precaution as taking the measure of his weaknesses. He knew that the one bribe he could not resist was the social bribe—that his one chance for success in the

career he had mapped out for himself lay in having no friends among those he must fight. And in the nearest rank of them were Hollister, the railway giant of the State, and Judge Powers, his brother-in-law and closest judicial agent. A day or so later, when he, walking up Main Street, saw Clara Hollister and Eleanor Clearwater driving toward him in a phaeton, he abruptly turned to inspect a window display. He shivered and jumped ridiculously when he heard Clara's voice at his elbow.

"*You* interested in *millinery!*" Miss Hollister was saying laughingly.

He noted with a wild glance that he had stopped before a show window full of women's hats. "How d'ye do, Miss Powers," he stammered.

"Hollister," she corrected. "Judge Powers is my *uncle.*"

Helm's confusion became a rout. "I—I beg—your pardon," he said, dropping his hat and a law book he was carrying. In picking them up he slipped, and with difficulty saved his long, loose frame from sprawling upon the sidewalk. But as he straightened up, by one of those sudden inward revolutions, he became cool and self-possessed. He burst out laughing at himself—and when he laughed his fine eyes and his really splendid teeth made him handsome—for a homely man.

"Please talk to Nell Clearwater while I'm in here," said Clara, leaving him with a nod and a smile to flit in at the open door of the shop.

Helm advanced to the curb where the phaeton was drawn up. One glance at Miss Clearwater's cold and reserved face was enough to convince him that she was

an unwilling party to Clara Hollister's plot. He said, with a simple, direct frankness:

"It isn't quite fair—is it?—to blame me. I certainly tried to avoid you."

Their glances met. She could not resist the kindly humorous twinkle in his eyes. "I'm glad to see you again," said she, polite, if not cordial. Her hand hesitated, moved to extend, settled itself again beside the hand holding the reins. "You're back to stay?"

"Yes." His hand rose toward his hat for the leave-taking.

"In politics?"

"Yes."

Her look was coldly disdainful. "I can't wish you success," she said, with a slight nod of dismissal.

"That is not to your credit," replied he, with quiet dignity.

She flushed. "You know that you your-

self are ashamed of what you are doing," said she.

"Why do you say that?"

"You were ashamed to come to Mr. Hollister's house."

"I had two reasons for not going there," said Helm. "Neither of them was shame—or anything like it. Mr. Hollister may be ashamed. He certainly is afraid. But I am not. They wished to bribe me to silence by flattering me with their friendship. I refused to be bribed. That was one of my reasons."

As he said it in that way of simple sincerity which made him convincing, both in private life and on the platform, she accepted his statement as the truth. "I don't know much about business and politics."

"But you know enough to suspect I may be right," replied he.

"My sympathies are with my own class," said she, rather coldly.

"And mine are, naturally, with my class," said he.

There was no ostentation in his reply. But somehow Nell Clearwater felt not quite so well content with her "class"—or with her claim to it. That personal claim now seemed distinctly vulgar in contrast with his dignity. She said:

"What was your other reason for not coming?"

He gazed directly at her. "Why should I tell it when you know already?"

Again she colored. "You are impertinent," said she haughtily. Then the color flamed, for she instantly realized how she had trapped herself.

He laughed with engaging gentleness. "Not impertinent," he urged. "Not presuming, even. . . . I don't want you,

Miss Clearwater. I stay away simply because I don't intend to allow myself to want you." Into his gray eyes came a look that no woman could fail to understand. "If I did want you——" He smiled, and she drew back sharply—"If I did want you, I'd act very differently."

She forced a scornful laugh. "Do you think *you* could possibly have any hope with me?"

"I do," was his firm reply. "I didn't until to-day. Now I—know it."

"What vanity!"

"No. Not vanity. Intuition. The fact that you brought the subject up and insisted on discussing it proves that you have thought about it seriously."

"Really!" exclaimed she, with angry irony.

"Really," replied he—and she refused to meet his gaze. "Not as much as I have,

because you have more of that sort of things in your life than I have in mine. No, not nearly as much. But seriously. And because you are truthful you will not deny it."

She repeated the slight derisive laugh. She accompanied it with a derisive glance that swept down and up his baggy clothing, his homely exterior—but avoided his kind, gently smiling gray eyes. He was not deceived. It set his blood to tingling to feel that he could weave about one person, this one person, the same spell with which he could bind the multitude. He went on:

"Working together at that broken automobile we got unusually well acquainted, very quickly—you and I—the real you and the real I. . . . I had never before met a woman of your kind—of your class, I suppose you'd say. And neither had you ever met a man of my kind."

"Yes—that was it," she said unsteadily.

"But, as I said before, I do not want you," he went on and, hearing, you would have realized why he had such power as an orator. "Even if I could get you, I should not know what to do with you. So—if we ever talk together again, it will not be through my seeking."

He bowed with dignity and grace—for, whenever he was unconscious of himself—on the platform or when absorbed in earnest conversation — his awkwardness dropped from him, revealing his homeliness as attractive. He went on uptown, dazed, wondering at himself, doubting whether he was awake. Had he indeed seen Eleanor Clearwater? Had they said to each other the things he was amazedly recalling? Awe of male externals of ornamentation and pretense he had never felt. But his awe for fashion and manner in women had been deep and painful—and

reverent. What had become of this? Certainly no other woman he had known, or for that matter seen, possessed the awe-inspiring qualities to such a degree as this woman. Ever since that night of toil with the automobile he had been idealizing and worshiping her as the embodiment of woman, the paradise from which he was forever barred. Yet, alone with her for the first time, and in circumstances which ought to have made him speechless, he had disregarded her disdain, had smiled at her scorn, had spoken his heart to her as he had never ventured to speak it to himself in the privacy and the ecstasy of his secret dreams! "I guess I *am* a queer chap," he said to himself. "I'm always giving myself surprises. I never know what I'll do next."

It is an excellent thing for a modest man of real merit to discover that he has un-

suspected resources of steady courage. It was an excellent thing for George Helm. From that day he took on a new dignity and assurance—created about himself the atmosphere that inspires men to confidence in their leaders. He changed the liking of his followers into that passionate loyalty which is the great force in the world of action. For most men cannot reason and judge; they must choose a party and a leader by instinct and must trust themselves to that party and that leader implicitly. The story of history is the story of loyalty—and of loyalty betrayed. The mass has trusted and worshiped a class; the class has become infatuated with itself, has trampled on and betrayed the mass.

George Helm had won, the previous fall, because the mass of the people in that district had at last become more than suspicious of the honesty and fidelity of their

chosen leaders. He had come at just the right time. And he now won again—an overwhelming victory that could not be reversed by election frauds, with Branagan no longer assenting and assisting—a victory that frightened Reichman not only for his damaged machine but also for his personal safety; for, a Democratic county prosecutor, a subtle henchman of Branagan's, had been elected along with Helm, and Reichman knew that Judge Powers would desert him the instant it became to his interest so to do.

"No wonder," replied Helm, with a smile. "I haven't any place yet. I'm trying to find my place. . . . If the choice in, say, Lincoln's day, had been what it is now—between serving a knave and serving a fool—between serving a knave that's owned by its money and serving a fool that's enslaved to the knave by its folly

—if Abe Lincoln had had choice between those two rotten apples, I wonder which he would have chosen?"

"Lincoln was a practical man," said Branagan. "He had all the cranks and romantic reformers down on him. Don't you believe what the histories say. I *know* because I lived then."

"Yes—he was a practical man," said Helm. "He must have been, for he won."

"And I reckon you'll win, too."

"Yes," said Helm, with a humorous drawl, "I reckon I will."

The excitement of boss over campaign and victory is the same in kind as the excitement of humblest, most fatuous partisan—though it is vastly different in degree. Branagan had been hypnotized out of his sordidness—for the moment—by the issues and by Helm. But even as he arranged his mind for talking business with Reich-

man he returned to his normal state; and when he and the Republican boss got together for the grand pow-wow he was wondering at his own sentimentality of a few days before. The chief article of the treaty of peace was no more George Helm. Branagan agreed with a qualm and a genuine regret, but he agreed as one obeying the plain mandate of the instinct of self-preservation.

"I wish to God we could get him out of the Senate," said Reichman. "Of course our boys in charge up at the capital will see that he don't get a chance to say much or to do anything. Still, I wish he was back in the ranks—away back."

"Well—he will be in two years," said Branagan. "And what's two years in politics?"

"That's right," assented Reichman. "Two years isn't any time, anywhere."

"Except in jail," said Branagan, with a loud laugh.

Reichman conceded only the feeblest of smiles to this coarse jest, savoring of innuendo. "Those sort of chaps," pursued he, "have to be caught young and put out of business. I've attended to a dozen of 'em in the last ten years."

"I'd never 'a touched him," said Branagan, "after that first campaign, if I hadn't been put in a position where I was forced to do it."

"That was my fault, Pat, I admit," said Reichman. "But it won't occur again."

"I know it, Emil," said Pat. "We've both had our lesson. . . . I won't say nothin' to Helm. I'll keep him jollied along until his term's about up."

"Then—over he drops," laughed Reichman.

Branagan did not laugh. He liked Helm. But he did nod—and Branagan's nod was as good as his word, and his word he had never broken.

III

"THERE GOES A MAN"

MRS. SALFIELD and Mrs. Ramon, leaders in Cincinnati's fashionable society, were disposed in a comfortable corner of Mrs. Salfield's ballroom. They were sheltered from rheumatism-provoking draughts. They were at conversational range from the music. They commanded a full view of the beautiful ball, even of the supper room, where a dozen men were "mopping up the champagne instead of doing their dancing duty," as Mrs. Ramon put it. Mrs. Ramon, posing as of the younger generation, went in—somewhat awkwardly—for the "picturesque" in language. Mrs. Salfield,

frankly an old woman, tolerated slang as she tolerated rowdy modern manners and "disgraceful, not to say indecent exposuré in ball dresses"; but in her own person she adhered to the old fashions of moderately low dresses and moderately incorrect English. Said Mrs. Ramon:

"There goes that charming grandniece of yours. How graceful she is. I thought you told me she was twenty-nine."

"Eleanor Clearwater—twenty-nine!" exclaimed Mrs. Salfield. "She's not yet twenty-four."

"Oh, I remember, you said she *looked* twenty-nine — so serious — dignified — reserved—really icy. But that was only two months ago. She looks eighteen now. She's been away—hasn't she?"

"Just returned," said Mrs. Salfield.

"It did her a world of good—freshened her up—no, softened—no, I mean warmed."

"She's been visiting the Hollisters, down at Harrison."

"A country town. I supposed she'd been to baths or springs or something. Really the change in her is quite miraculous. She has waked up."

"Eleanor never was what one'd call sleepy," said Mrs. Salfield, rather stiffly.

"Oh, she was always interested in *things* —books, serious subjects—too much so for my taste. But you know what I mean. She looks *human*—looks as if she had a human interest. It was the one thing lacking to make her entirely interesting and beautiful—to give her magnetism. You notice how the men flock about her. She's having a triumph. Why, she looks round—looks at the men—in a positively flirtatious way. Really, Clara, it's too wonderful. *What* has happened to her?"

"What could happen to a girl in Harrison? Nothing but Bart Hollister."

"It couldn't be Bart," said Mrs. Ramon.

"It isn't anybody," said Mrs. Salfield. "It's simply a case of coming-to a little late. So many young people take life too solemnly at first. They feel responsible for it."

The phenomenon thus noted by Mrs. Ramon had escaped no one's eyes. Even Eleanor's father, the absorbed George Clearwater, United States Senator and "lumber king," had seen it. Eleanor Clearwater had gone to Harrison, a reserved, cool, not to say cold young woman, with an air that made her seem years older than she was, and with an interest in men so faint that it discouraged all but two dauntless fortune hunters—who were promptly sent to look further. She had come back, a lively, coquettish person, with a modern

tendency to audacities in dress and speech. Every one wondered; no one could explain. She could have explained, but she would not have admitted the truth even to herself. Four men proposed within two weeks after her return. She refused them all—in a gay, mocking way, thus enabling them to feel that they had not humiliated themselves, that she had imagined they were proposing merely to make interesting conversation.

The cause she would not admit? A lank, homely, ill dressed country town lawyer, one George Helm. The year before he had been the joke of Harrison because of his absurd beard and his seedy suit with its flowing tails. The shaving of the beard, the changing of the "statesman's frock" for an ill fitting sack suit, two campaigns in which he had developed power and originality as a speaker, an election to the State

Senate by attacking "everything that was respectable and decent," that is, by telling the truth about the upper-class grafters—these circumstances had combined to make him a considerable and serious figure in Harrison. But for such as the Hollisters and the Clearwaters he remained a bumpkin, a demagogue, an impossible lower-class person.

Yet he had wrought the wondrous, proposal-fraught change in Miss Clearwater. And he had done it by impudently pausing at her phaeton in Harrison's main street and telling her, with exasperating indifference to her icy manner, that he could marry her if he wished but that he had no place in his life for such a person as she.

Why had this transformed her? For two reasons, both important to those men who would fain have influence over one—or more—of the female sex. The first is, that

he had been able to impress upon her the fact that he was a worth-while person. The second is, that he, being serious and simple, had shown her that he, the man worth while, meant it when he said she was not a girl a worth-while man would care to marry. With these two propositions firmly fixed in her head, Eleanor Clearwater could not fail to see that it was "up to" her to demonstrate her power over man.

She invited proposals—proposals not too obviously incited chiefly by her charms as an heiress. She got the proposals. But still she was not satisfied. There was one man—a homely man, but a man with far and away the handsomest soul she had ever seen—simple, proud, honest and fearless—looking from eyes that were the more beautiful for the rugged homeliness of the rest of his face. This man whom her woman's heart defiantly told her was supremely

worth while—this man had said *she* was not worth while. Therefore, there were worlds still defiantly unconquered—which meant that nothing was conquered. It irritated her—as her father had been irritated until all the lumber interests had been gathered in under his lordship. It irritated her yet more profoundly that such an absurdity as this gentle and friendly disdain of bucolic homeliness should irritate her. But she could not change her nature.

He had set her to thinking about him. He had her worried, as the saying is. And when a man gets a woman in that state, she will not emerge from it until something definite has occurred.

Woman has little to think about but men—thanks to a social system cunningly contrived by man for his own benefit. She thinks of man in general until she centers upon one man. She then thinks of him

until she finds him out. When that comes to pass, she goes back to men in general, until a new personal interest develops. This, so long as any remnant of charm gives her hope. Man is woman's career. Not so with men; not so with George Helm, State Senator elect and desperately in earnest about making a career.

While Eleanor Clearwater was sleeping away the excitements of the Salfield ball in her attractive bedroom in the Clearwater palace, George Helm was at work several hundred miles away in his dingy back office in the Masonic Building at Harrison. When she should be awakened by her maid to dress for her first engagement of the day, she would soon be thinking of George Helm—thinking how ugly and obscure and ungainly he was—and what magnetic eyes he had. Thinking the more, the more she

tried not to think. But George Helm was not thinking of her at all.

He was sitting beside the rickety old table in a wooden chair, a kitchen chair. It was tilted back and Helm's long lank legs were tangled up with each other and with the rungs in amazing twists. Perhaps you have happened to know an occasional man —or woman—whose every act and trick of manner had an inexplicable fascination. When George Helm was self-conscious, he had no more magnetism than is inseparable from intelligent, sympathetic good nature sunning in a kindly keen sense of humor. But the instant he lost self-consciousness— as he always did on the platform, and as he was more and more doing in private life, now that he had begun to have success— that instant he became a magnet, one of those human magnets who interest you, no matter what they do, and in repose. Even

in bed—that too short, sagging bed in the attic of Mrs. Beaver's boarding house—even as he lay doubled up, there was the fascination of the unique, the perfectly natural and unassuming.

As he sat twisted in and upon the wobbly kitchen chair, his friend, lazy Bill Desbrough, from across the hall, looked in every few minutes, hoping George would encourage him to enter. It was curious about George Helm, how in spite of his lack of what passes for dignity, no one ever —even in the days when he was thought to be a joke—"the boy with that beard"—no one ever ventured to interrupt him without an encouraging look from those deep-set blue-gray eyes.

At last George looked up and smiled as Bill stood in the doorway. He said:

"Come in, you loafer."

"How's State Senator-elect Helm to-

day?" inquired Bill, lounging in, his hands in his pockets, his pipe hanging from the corner of his mouth. "How does it feel to be famous?"

"To be less obscure," corrected George. He had a passion—and a genius—for accuracy.

"To be famous," insisted Desbrough.

"Do you know who is State Senator for the district adjoining this—on either side? —or to the north or south?"

Bill Desbrough's laugh was confession.

"There are fifty State Senators in this State alone," continued George. "There are forty-eight States in the Union. Fifty times forty-eight——"

"Why are you trying to make yourself out so small?"

"Or—to look at it another way, I belong to the Democratic boss of Harrison—Pat Branagan, saloon-keeper. He belongs to

the Republican boss, Al Reichman. 'Al belongs to Senator Harvey Sayler, the State boss. Sayler belongs to the big monopolistic combines that center in Wall Street. They belong to a dozen big plutocrats who belong to about three of their number. 'And those three belong to their money—do what it says, say and think what it tells 'em to."

"I hope you're happy now," said Bill. "You've made yourself out to be about equal to a patch on the ragged pant-leg of some cotton-picking coon working for the sub-lessee of a mortgaged farm in a poor corner of Arkansas."

"Or, to look at it another way," continued Helm, untwisting his legs, immediately to re-knot them in an even more intricate tangle, "a State Senator gets six dollars a day while the Legislature's in session. It meets for sixty days every two years.

His term's four years. So, my money value as the State sees it is one hundred and eighty dollars a year—about fifty cents a day."

"Well, I hope you've shrunk yourself back to normal human size," said his friend. "I suppose that's what you're doing this for."

"No, Bill. To locate myself. I want to see just where I stand. The slave of a slave of a slave of a slave of a slave of a slave—I think that's the right degree—and at fifty cents a day."

"Branagan gives you some pretty good law cases," suggested Bill.

Helm eyed him somberly.

"You know you don't want to be too *damn* independent, old man," continued Bill.

"To locate myself," pursued Helm, as if Bill had not spoken. "I want to see just how far I've got to go before——"

He paused here. Said Bill—not altogether in jest, "Before you're President of the U. S. A.?"

"No," said George gravely. "Before I'm a man. Before I belong to myself." He laughed with his peculiar illumination of the whole face apparently from the light of the eyes. "You see, Bill, I'm aiming to go further than most Presidents—especially these latter-day chaps."

"Further than most plutocrats," said Desbrough. "As you said, *they* belong to their boodle bags. . . . You haven't broken with Branagan?"

"Not yet," said Helm. "I'll have to, soon after the Legislature opens. You see, we're the minority, and nowadays the majority-boss always uses the minority votes to put through whatever dirty business a lot of his men have to be let off from voting for."

"Well—don't break with good old Pat till you have to."

"I'll get all I can first, you may be sure," said Helm. "I'm a practical man—that is, I'm a practical politician, with a dangerous, incurable hankering for being a man—self-owned and self-bossed."

"You give Branagan good legal service for what he pays you."

"And he hasn't yet asked me to do any law work that I've not been able to stand for."

"Pat's a little afraid of you," declared Desbrough. "He knows how strong you are with the people."

Helm slowly shook his head. "I don't deceive myself. He's saving me till he really needs me." He straightened out his long figure deliberately, rose and began to pace up and down the office. "It's all a question of money, Bill. In this day a man

has got to have an independence—or do what some other man says."

"If I could speak as you can—and hold the crowds—and draw in their votes—— You, a Democrat, elected from this district of shell-back Republicans who talk about the Civil War as if Morgan was still raiding the State." Bill laughed. "Why don't you drop politics, George? Why fool with the silly game? The people'll never learn anything. They can always be buncoed—the asses! What did God make 'em for? To work like hell all day and then hand over most of what they've made to some clever chap—and thank him for taking it."

"That used to be so," replied Helm. "But they're waking up, Bill. All they need is the right kind of leaders."

"Meaning you?"

"Meaning me," said Helm. And his ex-

pression far removed his statement from vanity or egotism.

Desbrough puffed at his pipe in silence. Presently he said:

"You can count me in, George—if there's anything I can do."

They did not shake hands. They exchanged no gushing remarks. They did not look at each other with exalted sentimentality. They simply looked—then George grinned and nodded—and said:

"All right, Bill. You're in."

A long silence. Then Desbrough:

"Not that I believe in the game, old man. I don't. I despise the people. I'd go in with the wise boys who rob them if I didn't happen to have inherited enough to slop along on."

"How much have you got?" said George—a necessary question, as this was to be a partnership.

"Nineteen hundred and fifty a year—county bonds and a farm. My law practice—I made seventy-five dollars last year."

"You won't take anything but people too poor to pay—and then only when you think they're being wronged by somebody with money. That's why I asked you in."

"You didn't——" Desbrough stopped and laughed. "Yes, you did, come to think of it. I'd never have offered if you hadn't made me feel that you wanted me. I'd not have done it even then, if you hadn't compelled me. How do you compel people to do things without even asking 'em, George?"

For reply Helm laughed. Said he:

"Nineteen hundred and fifty a year. That's enough for you. I must have more—about five thousand a year."

"You can make it at the law."

"If the gang didn't shut me out of the

courts, when I broke with them. And if I'd take crooked cases. I've thought that all out. It can't be done any more. Lincoln and the big fellows of the past could. But that was a different day. Now all the law cases worth while—all the good fees—come from the very chaps I've got to attack. A lawyer who has done any business as a lawyer can go into politics in only one way—and that's a more or less crooked way. I've thought it all out, Bill. I can't afford to make an independence, and then wash up and go in on the level. I hoped I could see my way clear to do it. But—I can't."

"But you won't get money any other way," said Desbrough. "And if you haven't got the money to live on and to carry on your campaigns, why, you're beaten in advance."

"I haven't forgotten my campaign for

judge," said Helm. "Bill, I've learned a thing or two about practical politics. I'm going to play cards—not play the fool."

"Why not marry Clara Hollister?" cried Desbrough, suddenly inspired.

"Would she have you?" asked Helm.

"Me? Good Lord, what'd *I* do with another wife? I had *one,* and am paying alimony. No, I mean *you* marry Clara."

Helm laughed uproariously. "Take another look at me, Bill," said he. "You've forgotten."

"Women don't know anything about handsome and ugly in men," said Bill. "Besides, you're not what *women'd* call plain. Don't laugh, George. I'd back you to win any woman you took after. A man that can catch crowds can catch a woman. With a woman, it isn't what a man *looks.* It's what he *says*—and does."

"I've got no woman-talk," said Helm.

"You can grab off Clara Hollister if you want her—and she has twenty thousand a year in her own right. And she'll let you do what you please with it."

"Her father's the head devil in these parts of the gang I'm after."

"The twenty thousand's hers. She's a good deal of a snob, but she'd be what you wanted her to be, if you married her. That's the way it is with women."

"Was that your experience?"

"I spoke from experience," replied Desbrough, undaunted. "I made my wife over when I married her—and then didn't like the job. I'd rather pay alimony than be constantly reminded of my failure."

"No—I can't marry for independence," said Helm. "She wouldn't have me and—I don't want her."

"Then—why not that friend of hers—that Miss Clearwater? I saw you talking

to her down the street one day before the election. She'd be less easy to manage than Clara. But no woman's difficult—for a firm man who's patient and can keep his temper—and isn't in love."

Helm had become acutely self-conscious and so awkward that a chair which was apparently not near his path became involved with his big feet and fell on its side with a crash. As Helm straightened from picking it up, he was extraordinarily red for the amount of exertion. Said he:

"Leave the women out of it. I'm not a marrying man."

Desbrough laughed mockingly. "You'll find out you're mistaken—as soon as you've got money enough to make it worth a needy woman's while to take after you. *I* thought *I* wasn't a marrying man. Three months and four days after my uncle died and left me that money I was waiting at the altar."

"I'm not a marrying man," repeated Helm awkwardly.

"In some ways Miss Clearwater would be just the girl for you. She'd take an interest in your career. She has ideals—and they're about as far removed from her father's as a church from a speak-easy. I think she's got money of her own. Yes, I'm sure she has. Her mother left her what the old man had settled on her."

"If I did marry," said Helm, abruptly self-possessed, "it'd be a woman that suited *me*—one I felt at home with. I want no grand rich ladies, Bill. Anyhow, I've thought of another way—one that's practical."

And he seated himself and proceeded to unfold the scheme upon which he had been seriously at work ever since the election. It was a simple scheme, wisely devoid of untried originality, but effective. His two

campaigns, despite the silence of the plutocracy-controlled press, had got him a considerable reputation throughout the State. The press is not so necessary to the spread of intelligence as is latterly imagined. Long before there was a press, long before there was any written means of communication, news and knowledge of all kinds spread rapidly throughout the world, pausing only at the great desert stretches between peoples—and not often halted there for long. The old ways of communication have not been closed up. To this day the real and great reputations of the world are not press-made or press-sustained or even materially press-assisted. They are the work of mouth-to-mouth communication. And those reputations, by the way, are they against which the calumny and the innuendo of the press strive in vain.

It had spread from man to man through-

out the State that there had arisen in Harrison a strange, plain youth of great sincerity as a man and of great power as a speaker. The Jews of ancient days are not the only people who have dreamed of a Messiah. The Messiah-dream, the Messiah-longing has been the dream and the longing of the whole human race, toiling away in obscurity, oppressed, exploited, fooled, despised. Hence, news of leaders springing up spreads fast and far among the people. The news about Helm was hardly more than a rumor. A hundred miles from Harrison, and they had his name wrong. A little further, and they hadn't yet heard his name. But far and wide there was the rumor of a light in the direction of Harrison. Would it be a little star or a big? a fixed star or a mere comet?—would it prove to be nothing but a meteorite, flashing and fading out? Would it be a sun?

These questions not definite, but simply the vague, faint suggestion of question.

The people!—how little we understand them—how much and how often we misunderstand them. The people, so ignorant, yet so quaintly wise—as they toil in the obscurity, building patiently, working and hoping—and waiting always for leaders. Deceived a thousand times, they wait on and hope on—since leaders they must have, and since leaders will surely come.

Helm did not exaggerate the public interest in himself. If anything he, the most cautiously Caledonian of career-builders, estimated his reputation at less than it was. But he had the true man of the people's instinct for the feeling of the people. His crusading spirit was not either academic or fanatic. It was the sensible indignation of the man who discovers that a certain evil has gone far enough and must be put down.

He felt that, if he could manage his career sensibly, he could make it all he wished. The pressing problem was how to increase this reputation into fame of the kind useful to his purposes as a public man, and how to transform that increased reputation into a cleanly-acquired independence.

"And it seems to me, Bill," said he, "that the best available plan is a lecture tour—through the towns, villages, crossroads hamlets of the whole State."

"Talking politics? Nobody'll listen to politics except round election time. That's why robbing the people's the easiest and the favorite way to make money."

"Everything's politics," said Helm. "Religion's politics, and education's politics, and farming and mining and factories and doctors and storekeeping—everything! What's politics but settling how the proceeds of everybody's labor are to be dis-

tributed—whether the man who works is to get what he works for or somebody else is to get it? And that question means everything that affects any human being, morally, mentally, physically. I'm going to talk politics, but they'll not know it."

"Where do *I* come in?"

"You're to be my manager—arrange the dates and so on. It's got to be arranged while I'm busy in the Legislature, in January and February. I'll do what I can there to make myself talked about. You'll correspond with culture clubs and literary circles and churches that want debts raised and public schools and trade schools with lecture courses."

Desbrough looked willing but helpless. "Is there much chance to lecture in this State?" said he. "I thought that sort of thing had died out."

"If it had, we'd raise it from the dead," said Helm. "But it hasn't."

He took from the drawer of his table a bundle of papers. He waved them triumphantly at his friend, saying:

"Here it is, Bill—all down in black and white. A hundred and eighty-six chances to lecture—if it's worked right."

Desbrough, the lazy man, groaned. "Why didn't you pick out somebody else, damn you!" he cried.

"You offered," said Helm.

"You hypnotized me," retorted Desbrough. "Lord, what a pile of work!"

"Yes," said Helm. "You'll have to begin right away. I calculate to make twenty-five hundred dollars by the first of June. I want to build this thing up in a couple of years into a steady income of five to ten thousand—an income nobody can touch so long as people'll come out to hear me." The

handsome blue-gray eyes looked anxiously from the homely face. "Bill, am I deceiving myself? Do you think they'll *pay* to hear *me?*"

"You can't expect 'em to pay much—at first."

"I was thinking it'd be about right to ask ten dollars for the little places, and fifteen to thirty for the bigger ones."

"I'll have to feel that out," said Bill. "Leave something for the manager to do."

"Put the prices low, Bill," said George. "It's safer. Also, we want to reach *all* the people. And I'm going to write some lectures that'll educate 'em in what's going on under their noses. About these lectures—they're to be a mixture of humorous and serious. I've got a lot of good stories I can work in. The first lecture's pretty nearly ready."

"What's it about?"

"The American Home—as it was—as it is—as it should be."

"Wit, wisdom and weeps?"

Helm nodded.

"That sounds good. I begin to feel that there's something in it. . . . Look here, Helm—that tour's going to be a frightful strain on your health."

George looked down at his long lean figure in the baggy blue suit. "There isn't anything about me to get sick, Bill," said he. "Back where I come from they dry 'em out like an oak board before they send 'em away from home. All the germs get when they tackle us folks is broken teeth."

Why does the world insist on believing that luck is the deciding factor in human affairs? Why is the successful man forced to pretend that he is "fortune's favorite,"

under penalty of being despised as a plodding or scheming fellow, if he does not? Because most men either cannot or will not plan. They "trust to luck"—and lose, except in romances and equally fictitious biographies. Without exception, all success is the result of plan. If a man has success thrust into his hands, it is immediately snatched away unless he plans wisely to keep it. If a successful man is wholly or partly ruined by chance, his habit of successful planning soon restores all that has been lost. Luck is an element for which every wise man makes allowance in his planning—for the good luck that will enable him to shorten his journey along the road he would have traveled in any event, for the bad luck that may lengthen the journey. Good and bad luck affect rate, not direction—among the men who attain to and persist in the triumphant class, from

the successful grocer to the successful poet or composer.

That winter luck favored George Helm. He did not have to break with the machine.

Senator Sayler, the representative of the plutocracy, quarreled with some of his largest clients—his bosses, they fancied themselves, until he, as astute as he was bold and cynical, showed them that he had made himself indispensable to them. He, the rich man as well as the expert and most intelligent politician; they, merely rich men, crudely buying of politicians the coveted robbers' licenses. The quarrel grew out of the idiotic greediness of his clients. They wished to rob to the point where the goose begins to squawk—and forthwith changes from goose into a creature of a wholly different kind, fighting with ferocity for life. Sayler proceeded to teach them a lesson. He, ostensibly head of the Repub-

lican machine and hostile to everything connected with the Democratic party, ordered his faithful ally-lieutenant, the Democratic State boss, Hazelrigg, to make a vigorous unsparing campaign against the plutocracy.

"Give 'em hell," said Sayler. "Don't turn loose a lot of long-eared cranks. They frighten sensible people and make the plutocracy stronger. Dig up some earnest, conscientious young fellows—if there are any such that haven't been brought up for these stupid brutes we're going to teach a lesson."

Hazelrigg had heard of Helm. Pat Branagan had given Helm a letter to him, but Helm had not presented it and had been keeping out of sight until he should have spied out the new land of the State capital. He sent for Helm to look him over. Hazelrigg was a college man who

had made up his mind to be rich. Discovering, after a few years of effort by honest ways, that if he succeeded at all it would be when he was too old to enjoy, he had taken the short cut—with notable success. Being the minority boss, he could maintain a pose of virtue that deceived all but shrewd eyes. He understood Helm in the main at a glance—asked him to speak against a rotten bill then pending. Helm spoke.

Hazelrigg listened with mingled feelings of joy and fear. "We must keep him poor," he said to himself. "Then he can't make trouble for us."

Before the first month was over, Hazelrigg had made George Helm the chief spokesman of the party in its campaign against the rapacities of the plutocracy. The old wheel-horse orators, familiar and more or less discredited slobberers of virtuous sentiments from mouths raw and ragged

with corruption, were angered and made futile attempts to "haze" the new favorite. Hazelrigg soon quelled that mutiny. Of all the understrappers at the beck and call of a machine boss, the orators—they upon whose lips the people hang spellbound—are the lowest, the most despised by their fellow slaves and the most brutally worked and the most meagerly paid.

As Sayler had taken the muzzle from the press of the State to make his "object lesson" thoroughly effective, in a few weeks George Helm became famous—newspaper famous—the beanstalk variety of fame, showy but perishable. Bill Desbrough came up to see him.

"The lecture scheme's off—isn't it?" said he.

"By no means," replied Helm. "I'll let you into my secret, Bill. You're close-mouthed—closer mouthed than I am."

"I doubt it," said Desbrough.

"Yes, for *I'm* telling you my secret—and *you'll* not tell anybody. Here's the secret! By those lecture tours I'm going to build up in every part of this State a machine of my own—groups of people I can trust and who feel they can trust me. There's some skull-duggery back of this spasm of party virtue. It won't last. We must hurry and make all we can out of it."

Most men cannot see the obvious, even when it is pointed out to them. The occasional rare man—the man of genius of one kind or another—is he who sees the obvious without assistance. In between these two classes lies a third class, not small like that of genius—yet not huge like the other. To this third class—those able to see the obvious if and when it is pointed out to them—belonged William Desbrough. He reflected on what George Helm had said;

and up went his admiration a considerable number of notches. Said he:

"George, what a run you'll give 'em!"

Helm clapped him on the shoulder with his loud, joyous, boyish laugh. "Put all your money on that, Bill!" cried he.

Helm's successes wrought in him the usual swift change. The temperament of success, the ability to throw one's whole concentrated self into an enterprise, involves a highly organized nervous system—hence, extreme sensitiveness, torments from anxiety and from self-doubt. Only an iron constitution could have borne the fatigues of that first campagn of his—the now famous "buggy" campaign—with its nerve strain of the man fighting again desperate odds to save himself from ruin under avalanches of ridicule. And when he finally "made good" in his home district, the question at once arose, "But can I make good at

the capital?" This question was in the way to be answered with an emphatic yes.

The respect with which he was treated by other men—men of consequence! The serious attention the papers gave his utterances! The huge piles of letters praising his courage, his logic, his freedom from crude abuse, his clearness of statement—letters from all parts of the State, from all parts of the Union! Those letters made his heart burn with new energy and high hope. He had indeed guessed right. The people—his people—the long-suffering masses were certainly on the alert for a leader. Yes, he was in the way to accomplish something of what he had resolved when he left the farm, because he was intelligent enough to discover that the big monopolies headed by the railway trusts had reduced the nominally independent farmer to the slavery of

the poorly paid wage-earner of the cities and towns. He was in the way to be of use in the gigantic task of restoring democracy and opportunity to the republic.

This man, planted upon this rock-founded confidence, could not but show in his exterior the external change. But where the small fellow reveals his fleeting or trivial success in an access of swagger, the large, simple nature reveals it in the deeper absorption in the career, the lessened consciousness of self. And as George Helm's self-consciousness had been the sole cause of his awkwardness and the chief cause of his extreme plainness, the change was most striking. He was no longer awkward. His long, spare figure revealed—as it always had on the platform after the first embarrassed moment—the innate grace that is in every natural, self-conscious creature. As for the homeliness—how can a strong face

be homely when in place of the unattractive expression of shy greenness there come the dignity and beauty of a large intelligence fittingly occupied? "There goes a man who amounts to something," they now said about Helm. And when you hear that said of a man, you may be sure he will not turn to you a homely face.

Senator Sayler had come on from Washington and had taken a house in the suburbs for the session because of the importance of the curious program he was putting through. He went to hear Helm speak against one of the grab bills his refractory clients were insisting upon. Sayler, as you knew, was a cynic; and when you find cynicism in a man, you may be sure you are at the cover for a lively and annoying secret self-contempt. He listened with his most cynical smile to the simple, sensible eloquence of the young farmer-

looking lawyer. But, as he listened, he was saying to himself, "We must attack this fellow, but it will not be easy." Afterward he had Hazelrigg bring Helm to the Lieutenant Governor's private room and talked with him for an hour. He would have talked much longer, had there not been a gentle knock at the door.

He disregarded it. The door opened and in came his wife—and Eleanor Clearwater. Mrs. Sayler—the trained wife of the public man—smiled engagingly at Helm and said to her husband:

"We simply can't wait any longer, Harvey. We were wondering how you dared keep us waiting. But if we had known whom you had with you——" She put out her hand to Helm. "That was a splendid speech, Mr. Helm. I don't know you, but it made me feel as if I did. I detest politics, but not the kind *you* talk."

Helm lapsed toward, but not into, his former awkwardness. He might have done better had not Eleanor been standing there, not all dignity and ice, but all merry smiles and impatience to speak.

"How do you do, Mr. Helm?" said she, as soon as Mrs. Sayler finished. "Father and I came to stop with Mrs. Sayler only this morning—and here you are. Really, it's—it's—what shall I call it—our always running across each other?"

Helm had no woman-talk. He stood—not too awkwardly—and silently gazed at the lovely and radiant young lady so unaccountably transformed from her former cold reserve. And, as the astute Sayler did not fail to note, he looked at her hungrily. Even Carlotta Sayler, the self-absorbed, saw in Helm's tell-tale face that there was "something or other between those two—though how could it possibly be!"

"I was about to ask Mr. Helm to dine with us to-morrow night," said Sayler.

"Yes, do," cried Carlotta, who never missed a cue. "It's to be early and most informal—no evening clothes or such nonsense. Won't it be delightful, Eleanor? Your father will be so pleased to meet one of *our* coming men."

Poor Helm was framing a refusal when he caught in Eleanor's eyes a look of appeal —a pleading request that he accept. Nor had he the excuse that Sayler was of the enemy. Sayler had shown him that he harbored no such petty notions of obligation as possess the average man who fancies that his foe ought to become his friend if he does him the honor of giving him a free cigar, or a free dinner, or a free drink. Also, he wished to talk with Sayler again. Sayler, expert at the political game, had in their hour's talk taught him more than he had

learned of all the other men with whom he had discussed politics. And Sayler was —for some mysterious reason—eager to give him the ammunition of facts about the doings of the plutocracy which he most needed.

"Thank you, ma'am, I'll be glad to come," said Helm. He added, "I've heard you're very dressy out at your place. You're *sure* you won't mind my clothes? I haven't any dress suits."

"A *man* can go where he pleases in what he pleases," said Sayler. "But there's no truth in that report about us. The women at our place are dressy, of course. They always are everywhere. If they're not that, they think they're not anything—and perhaps they're right. But it's go-as-you-please with the men."

Sayler discovered that he wished to look at the west wing of the capitol, walked with

his wife, thus forcing Helm to walk with Eleanor—and to walk ahead where he could observe. There was plenty to see

A serious young woman is never in any circumstances so interesting to a man as a light and gay, pretty woman, whatever men may pretend. It is inborn in the male to regard the female as the representative of the lighter side of life; and *so long as he is not married to her,* light she should be if she would please him—light and full of coquetry of the kind he happens to regard as "womanly." George Helm had cherished deep in his heart a peculiar feeling for Eleanor Clearwater since that first long talk he had with her, the only woman he had met who possessed worldly knowledge and beauty, refined and glorified by the highest civilized arts of manner and dress. Not love—not possibility of love, though he fancied it was love! Rather, a feeling

that here at last was a representative of the best in womankind—and George Helm, like all the ambitious, was born with the passion for the best of everything.

But this Eleanor was no longer the empedestaled goddess, the passive recipient of the homage due her beauty and her taste and her station. She had come to life; she had descended from her pedestal; she had placed herself—no, not within reach of men, but most tantalizingly less out of reach. And she spent that half hour or so in deliberately trying to captivate him, in putting him at ease, in making him feel that she was almost if not quite within reach. She did not herself realize—but Harvey Sayler did—how far she was going. But neither did she realize how much she had been affected by the fact that each time she saw this man he had made a stride forward as with seven league boots away from

the crudeness of the bucolic and toward his certain goal of power with vast masses of men. If she had not heard the speech before she saw him, if she had not found her own opinion confirmed by Sayler's manner toward him, she probably would not have gone so far. Not because she was calculating, you reader ever ready to discover your own deepest failings, however slightly manifested in another; but because she was human—delightfully human, since George Helm had dropped her abruptly down from the perch to which she had been raised by lifelong flatteries and extravagant compliment.

However, it was not until after dinner the following night that she really "laid siege." She was alone with poor Helm in the library—how cleverly the sly Sayler had maneuvered that!

You have seen a large fish moving in ease

and grace through the water? You have seen that same fish flopping and floundering and flapping about on land to which the angler has drawn it? That visualizes George Helm, at home among men, among politicians, or making a speech, and George Helm in a drawing-room among a lot of women in dresses cut as he had seen them cut only in illustrations. And the most ludicrous part of it all was that he fancied himself perfectly at ease. Eleanor Clearwater had hypnotized him into imagining his flounderings were like his motions in his native element.

Said she at length—any woman and almost any man can supply the preliminary or leading-up conversation:

"What a fascinating career you will have! Oh, I know you haven't told me about it. You simply won't talk about yourself, and have made me tell you everything about

myself from bibs up. But I can guess your career."

"We had only got you as far as short dresses," said he. "When you left that boarding school——"

"Nothing since," interrupted she. "I've simply been sitting round waiting for a husband. What else is there for a woman? Still, I never wish I'd been a man."

"Why not?" asked George. He was twisted into one of his strange poses—legs wound round each other, body bent forward, supported by his elbows. He had never been so blissfully, airily happy as watching this beautiful girl, with the most wonderful light he had ever beheld reflecting from her fair shoulders.

She looked at him with eyes suddenly grave. "Because as a woman I have the chance to be some day loved by a man. As a man"— her eyes danced—"I'd have had

nothing to look forward to but just a woman."

"What kind of a man do you want?" asked he—and his honest, rugged face showed in its frank innocence how impersonal the question was.

"A man like you," said she audaciously, her face merry.

He laughed loudly—a contagious outburst of joyous good humor that made the luxurious, conventional room seem a poor sort of place. Such a laugh is a very different matter from one that seems a poor, noisy sort of clamor in a room.

"You have courage—strength. You don't pose." All this she said with the lightness that made it in good taste—and none the less sincere. "You are on the side all these other men have deserted as soon as they became prosperous."

"Perhaps I shall, too," said he.

"I suppose it must be the wrong side, or surely all of them wouldn't have left it. But—somehow, I think you won't."

"I can't," said he. And *he*—his real self—began to look from his eyes—and to look at her.

In spite of herself, she became serious. "No—you can't," assented she, absently. "You've changed—every time I've seen you. But not in that one respect. Whenever I look at you, I still see—as I did that first time—farms and factories—and thousands of men and women at work——"

"And children," he interrupted, a strange, somehow ferocious note in his quiet voice.

"I don't forget them," said she. "I try to, but I don't. . . . No, you'll not change sides. And you'll marry some woman on that side, and she'll——"

"I'll marry the woman I want—when I can afford to marry," said he. "Women

aren't on one side or the other. This is a man's fight. A woman—she goes with the man who takes her."

She smiled with some raillery. "Be careful to select the woman of that sort," said she, "or you may have to change your mind—suddenly and rather disagreeably—about women."

He made a large gesture of indifference.

"You don't care about women?" she asked.

A look of melancholy came into his face. He said with a quaint smile, "They began it. They don't care about me."

"Why not?"

"What a foolish question!"

"You're mistaken," said she. "Any woman would *like* you, and if a woman fell in love with you she'd be crazy about you."

He laughed boyishly as at a huge joke.

"You're a peculiar sort of man—a sort

not many women would appreciate. If you find one who does, you'll see that I was right. She'll be a peculiar sort of woman and she'll belong to you."

There was pathos in his expression of gratitude. She saw it, understood it—and the tears welled into her eyes. What a lonely, fascinating figure of a man—so different from all other men—so modest about himself—and with such incredibly luminous eyes, tender yet strong. She was looking directly at him. The changing expression of his eyes terrified her—fascinated her. He stood up, and his gesture compelled her to stand also—and to look at him. He stretched out his powerful arm. She tried to draw back; she could not.

"I believe," said he in an awed, hushed voice, his eyes looking at her wonderingly, "I believe *you* are the woman."

He had misunderstood, she said to her-

self. Then— "No," she thought, "I've been leading him on. What a foolish, bad thing to do! And he thinks I was in earnest—when nothing could induce me——"

He interrupted her thoughts with, "Yes —you *are* the woman!"

He had her shoulders in his grasp now and was looking down at her with an expression of sheer amazement, mingled with a tenderness that sent a thrill and a hot wave of—yes, of delight—through her. This man— She, Eleanor Clearwater, tolerate the touch of this man and—*delight* in it!

"That is absurd!" she cried hysterically. She looked at him with pleading eyes. "Let me go—please."

He lifted his hands from her shoulders. Then—how it happened she never could understand—she, trying to draw back, was

drawn forward—into his arms—had been kissed by him—was in a whirl of joy, of terror, of wonder, of disbelief in the reality of what was happening. She, who prided herself on never having allowed any man to be in the least familiar with her—she in the arms of this bucolic person whom she hardly knew. It was impossible—it was insane.

"Please let me go," she said feebly. "I don't know what's the matter with me!"

He was holding her at arm's length again —this powerful man, with the compelling eyes— If only he would not look at her so, she might recover herself. He was saying in the sweetest, tenderest voice she had ever heard:

"*You*—for *me!* It simply can't be, Miss Clearwater."

"Some woman will care for you—as I told you," she said in a breathless way. "But

not I. You told me once you wouldn't have me."

"But I didn't know you then," replied he. "Now—I've *got* to have you!"

She gave a cry of dismay. "Oh—don't say that—please!" she pleaded. "I'm sure you don't want me."

"No, I don't want you," confessed he, frankly. "I don't know what on earth I'm going to do with you. How can you break with your father and everybody and go tracking off into poverty with me?"

"As for that," began she, "I've got something of my own, and——"

She stopped short in horror. What was she saying? Who was talking out of her mouth and with her voice? She covered her face with her hands. "I don't mean it —I'm mad—crazy!" And she was in his arms, with him caressing her hair.

"You don't want me," he said gently,

"and I don't want you. But it looks as if we'd got to—doesn't it, Ellen?"

If there had been any abbreviation of her name that she detested more than any and all others, it had been Ellen. Yet now—in this absurd, lunatic dream she was having, she liked Ellen—in his voice. It seemed to be the name she had been waiting for, the name her man would brand upon her. Ellen. No longer Eleanor Clearwater, but just Ellen—nothing more.

She laughed hysterically. "I'm glad you didn't select Ella instead," said she. "No doubt I'd have accepted it, but I'd always have felt low."

They were looking at each other in a dazed way. At the sound of voices and laughter in the hall, both started and the crimson of shame deepened and deepened on Miss Clearwater's cheeks and neck and shoulders. They faced the others with

every sign of confusion and guilt, neither daring to look at the other. He stammered out phrases of departure and left, still with not a glance at her. Sayler decided that he had made an absurd premature proposal and had been sent about his business—"When he might have had her if he'd kept after her with a firm tread."

Out in the cold winter night, George strode along until he was half way to his hotel. Then he paused and addressed the stars, reeling with silent laughter!

"What a damn fool I've made of myself!"

Another man might have said, "What a fool she made of me!" But George Helm was no self-excuser, no shifter of responsibilities.

"But I've got to put it through," he went on, still speaking aloud but addressing the dim landscape in the horizon of which

towered the Capitol. "And since I've got to do it, I'll do it!"

A damn fool!—to take upon his already too heavily burdened shoulders this extra weight of a woman—and just the kind of woman who could be heaviest, most useless.

However, instead of walking with bent shoulders, he strode along, shoulders erect. And presently he was whistling like a boy in a pasture.

IV

THE MATCH-MAKER

MEN—and women—who restrain sentiment to an obscure, uneffectual part in their own lives take enormous interest in it everywhere else. They have melting eyes and troublesome noses and throats at sentimental plays. They give to street beggars and patronize the literature of slop. They are assiduous matchmakers and want every one—except their own sons and daughters—to marry for love alone.

There was not a little of this in the composition of Harvey Sayler, the interesting boss of the Middle West—more interesting than the ordinary purely commercial boss

because he was at heart a bold and reckless gambler, one who had less interest in the stakes than in the game. He was in a sentimental mood about George Helm and Eleanor Clearwater. George Helm, the lean and lank, countrified new orator whom Sayler's secret lieutenant, the Democratic state boss Hazelrigg, had discovered in the State Senate; Eleanor Clearwater, heiress to the notorious—that is, famous—lumber king and Senator, a lady to her finger tips, fond of playing with "fine ideas" of all kinds, but helplessly dependent upon the culture and the luxury that can be got only by acts which proceed from anything but "fine ideas." A love affair, an engagement, a marriage between these two appealed to Sayler's love of the sentimentally romantic.

Also, Sayler had a streak of sardonic humor in him. He liked the mischievous pranks of fate—with the persons and prop-

erty and destiny of others. And it seemed to him that the coming together of these two would be one of fate's masterpieces at the practical joke. And how old Clearwater, the risen from farm hand, the intoxicated aristocrat, the unending snob, would rage and rave!

Also—and this was the most important of all, for Sayler never did anything that wasn't a move in his game— Also—he wanted George Helm.

For purposes that need not here be gone into, Sayler had ordered the Democrats to make a furious assault upon his protégé and ally and master, the plutocracy. Hazelrigg, obeying orders, had selected Helm to lead the attack, because Helm was about the only available man not publicly suspected of crookedness and hypocrisy, was an earnest, sincere and effective speaker, shrewd and sane. After Sayler heard Helm speak,

Hazelrigg hunted him up at the University Club. Those clubs to which men of all political faiths can and do belong are most useful for meetings of this sort. Said Hazelrigg:

"What do you think of him, Senator?"

"Of Helm?" said Sayler. A non-committal smile—and that was all.

"A dangerous man, I'd say," proceeded Hazelrigg. "He looks like a farmer and he's homely as a horse. But there's nothing of the jay about that brain of his. And how he does wake up, and wake things up, when he gets that lanky form of his straight on his big feet."

Sayler smiled again. He was a loquacious man, like all men of abounding mentality. All lakes that are copiously fed must copiously overflow. But he had the big man's usual false reputation for taciturnity. He was never anything but silent, or at

most terse, with understrappers. That sort of cattle had to be dealt with carefully.

"He's doing what I asked him to do, too damn well," said Hazelrigg. "I'll have to choke him off."

Sayler, however, was resolved to give his clients of the plutocracy a thoroughgoing scare. Said he:

"Oh, why not let him alone for the present, Hazelrigg?" Sayler was one of those who give orders in the form of interrogative suggestions.

"But he makes me nervous," objected the Democratic boss. "He's spreading like wildfire. I may have to nominate him for governor."

"Why not?" said Sayler. A sentimental smile; he was thinking of the "match."

"But—damn it, he'd likely be elected."

"Well—a good beating might do my

party a world of good. We've been in too long."

"But—I'm afraid I can't get any *hold* on him."

Sayler deigned no answer but a satirical smile.

"He'd probably make four years of merry hell. A governor can do a lot in this state. He can *do;* so he doesn't dare talk without doing, like most governors."

"He'd make a good governor," said Sayler.

"Yes—if I could get some *hold* on him."

Sayler's eyes were amused. Said he—and he had the habit of being intensely relevant while seeming to be most irrelevant:

"Curious jaw, that young fellow's got. Did you notice how long it is from ear to chin? There's a foolish notion about that—a long chin is a sign of strength. It means nothing—nor does a short chin. It's the

length of the jaw that makes persistence—endurance—and the unafraidness that advances without a tremor where even courage hesitates. An interesting young man."

Hazelrigg had never heard so long—or so puzzling—a speech from his secret chieftain. He said desperately:

"I give you fair warning, Senator, he may make it damned interesting for *us* if we aren't careful."

Sayler laughed pleasantly. "I wish he would. I'm tired of fighting mere cranks—or knaves attacking us simply to shake us down. Why is it, Hazelrigg, that the best can be changed into the worst? To find an absolutely abandoned woman, don't look among the girls from the lower classes. Find one born a lady, bred a lady. To get a chap who'll swallow any insult with gusto, who'll do any kind of dirty work with pleas-

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ure—go among the fallen gentlemen. Several in this club."

Sayler strolled away. Hazelrigg was laughing—uncomfortably. He said to himself, "Well, if the Senator was rapping me, he was banging his own conk, too."

Sayler had brought Helm and Miss Clearwater together at his house the night before—had arranged it as soon as their chance meeting in his presence had revealed to his shrewd eyes that there was something peculiar in their relations, something unwarranted by so casual an acquaintance as theirs apparently had been. And when, after he had seen to it that they were left alone together, he had found them in a state of nervousness that indicated anything but a smooth session, he had decided that Helm had made the mistake of proposing too precipitately—and had been refused.

He now went down to the Capitol to hunt Helm up.

An extraordinary amount of trouble for so distinguished a man to take about an almost obscure youth of rugged appearance, one he knew hardly at all. But Sayler was a profound man. It had been said of him that he had ruined more young men than any man of his time. It was his habit to seek out any youth who showed, to his acute insight into human nature, indications of unusual abilities. As there are not many such under our system of crushing in infancy or near it, all but a very few of the very strongest or luckiest, he had plenty of time left over for his other affairs. When he had won the personal liking of such a young man, he proceeded to show him—by ways of most delicate subtlety—how wise and sensible and just it was for a man of ambition to come in with the triumphant

classes, and not let any academic sentimentality attach him to the lost and hopeless and morally doubtful cause of the masses.

For a few years Sayler had drawn about himself, had drawn to the support of his policy of the earth for the strong and the sly, scores of the brightest young men of the Middle West. They served him well. They imbibed his genial philosophy of mingled generosity and cynicism. And in exchange for the support and the power they gave him, he gave them office and money and fame. He regarded himself as a benefactor. His young men regarded him as a benefactor. Only cranks denounced him as a procurer and a rake of the vilest description.

He had seen great possibilities in this big, unformed, young state senator, with the gift for eloquent clear statement and with

the voice and the eyes that captivated. He purposed to be his benefactor.

Helm was alone in one of the committee rooms, absorbed in the agitated composition of a letter. There were all the obvious signs that much time and paper were being consumed in vain. Sayler paused a moment to look well at his proposed next "victim," as the cranks would have put it. That long, lean, powerful form, uncouth yet curiously graceful—and somehow so intensely magnetic! That huge, rough-looking head, the strong features, the out-door skin. But Sayler saw only the superb line of the head, the long reach of the jaw. Said he to himself: "This fellow *looks* more worth getting than any I've ever tried for."

He advanced and laid his hand on Helm's shoulder. Said he, as Helm looked up, startled:

"I'm going to take a great liberty with you, Helm. I'm somewhat older—but not old enough to be out of your class. And I'm a friend of—of *hers*—and I want to be a friend of yours."

The color flooded poor George's face. He did not know what to do. The man-and-woman game was as strange to him as sailor life to the plainsman. And Sayler had adroitly leaped over the barrier of sensitiveness which Helm had begun to build about his inmost self as soon as he had begun to talk.

"I know you're writing to her," proceeded the frank and simple Sayler, "and I'm sure it's something foolish. The thing to do is to go and face her. She's leaving this afternoon."

"To-day!" exclaimed Helm, puzzled. "She said last night she was staying a week."

"She's leaving—because of you. When a woman thinks highly enough of a man to fly from him, all he needs do to get her is run her down."

"She's leaving?" said Helm. He began to tear up the paper. "Leaving on my account." He gave a laugh of relief. "Then it's all settled, and I don't need to write." He tore the paper into little bits and sent them to join the mass of similar little bits in the basket. "Evidently she got her head back this morning—just as I did. I wonder what there is about night time that makes people so excited and——"

"And courageous," said Sayler. "I wish I'd had the daring to do the things the night has urged me to do."

Helm shook his head laughingly. "The night's insane, the day's sane," retorted he. "I went crazy last night, Mr. Sayler. I've got so little that I have to skimp to get

along at all—and my prospects of any more money are mighty poor, I can tell you." With a humorous twinkle, "You see, I'm not on your side—the buttered side. I'm on the other side where there isn't any butter. Anyhow, I've no use for a wife—especially such a wife as that sort of a woman would be. And she— Why, she wouldn't want me as a husband if I was the last man on earth."

"Nonsense!" said Sayler. "Under all that trumpery flummery she's just a woman, and wants what any other woman wants—a *man*. And I think, my friend, that you come pretty near to sizing up to that description."

"She don't want me, nor I her," insisted Helm. "It was nothing but plain lunacy, my asking her to marry me and her accepting."

Sayler was so astounded that he almost

betrayed himself. His eyes sparkled sentimentally, and he gave the younger man a resounding clap on the shoulder. Why, the conquest was as good as made! "She accepted you, Helm, because she wants you. Last night she knew her real mind. By daylight, she's full of—of all sorts of pitiful fears. Go save her, Helm. Go to her. As soon as she's told her father, and he begins to fight you, everything's safe. I know her. She isn't a quitter, and her father will say things that will make her wild with rage—and with love for you."

By this time neither of these men, drawn together by their many traits of mind and character in common, had the slightest sense of strangeness. They felt like old friends. Helm said:

"But *I* don't want *her,* Sayler. I've got no money for her—no time for her—no place for her."

"You love her—don't you?" said Sayler audaciously.

Helm slowly collapsed into one of his uncouth poses.

"You see—you do. That means—what? Why, that you've got to have her. A man of your sort is no good with a thing like that unsettled."

Helm reflected. "No," he finally said. "I've put her out of my mind before, and I can do it again. Whenever I don't want to think of anything, I get together so many other things to worry about that there isn't room or time to worry about it. She's flying. Let her fly. That settles it."

"Didn't you tell me you proposed to her?"

Helm nodded.

"And that she accepted you?"

"But it's all over," said Helm.

"By no means," declared the adroiter

man. "She has given you her promise. She will say nothing because she will not wish to hurt you. But she'll keep to her promise until you release her."

Helm looked dismal. "Is that the way those things are managed?"

"You'll ruin her life, Helm. You've got to go to her—like a man. Don't do a cowardly thing—such as silence, or writing a foolish note. Face her. It's the only square thing."

And to Helm it seemed so. He groaned.

"Come along. I'll go with you, and see that you and she have a chance for an undisturbed talk."

"Wait a minute. I want to think." Helm went to the window and stared out into the capitol grounds. Sayler seated himself, lit a cigar and read a newspaper. Never had cake of his been spoiled by messing at the baking but unbaked dough.

Helm took much more than the one minute he had asked for. When he turned, it was to say with the composure of a man under control:

"Thank you, Sayler—you've done me a good turn. I am nothing of a lady's man. If you hadn't interfered, I'd have done something that as you say would have been contemptible. I'm ready when you are."

Rarely is there a successful man—even the crude seeker of petty power rising to foreman of the gang of laborers—who has not, however tough his skin or hide may seem to be, a supersensitive nervous system, more acute than that of ordinary men and women, though they may pretend to the most delicate sensitiveness. Sayler was as sensitive as he seemed phlegmatic. He never failed to sense the mood of the person he was with. Therefore, he dropped the subject of Eleanor and talked speeches.

Helm, another man of that same acute sensibility, responded as if he had no concern in the world beyond discussion of how speeches should be worked up and delivered. Sayler, deeply interested in the subject and in the man, led him on to describe his own method, this so sympathetically—rather than adroitly—that Helm took from his pocket an old letter on the blank side of whose single sheet he had outlined the "backbone" of a speech he was to make against a perpetual grant of a big trolley franchise. The franchise meant, of course, the creation of a huge mass of stocks and bonds which would enable many generations of a certain group of the upper class to live luxuriously by taking impudent toll from the masses in exchange for no service rendered.

"I shall take up the franchise in a series of speeches," explained Helm. "In each

speech I'll make one point and only one. That's always my method. If you want to dazzle a crowd, you make a speech full of good points. But if you want to convince them, you take one point and drive it home with a succession of blows, all on the head of that same nail."

Sayler nodded. "Won't you let me see that 'backbone' as you call it?" he asked.

"Nail is a better name," said Helm.

"Nail for the lid of the coffin of the trolley franchise grab," said Sayler.

"I hope so," said Helm.

"So do I," rejoined Sayler.

Helm gave him the sheet of paper and Sayler read in Helm's minute hand this series of notes:

Luxurious idlers.

Ladies and gentlemen. The more of them we have the poorer we become.

Proof:

Comfort means wealth and leisure to enjoy—that is, comfort in the lady and gentleman's sense of the word.

Leisure to enjoy means little or no labor.

But wealth can be created only by laboring; wealth is nothing but the proceeds of labor.

Therefore,

To have *comfort,* in the lady and gentleman sense, in the sense in which our new luxury-mad upper class is determined to have it, means that one must "appropriate" —that is, steal—the proceeds of the labor of others.

First corollary: That the more "comfortable" the upper class becomes, the more of the proceeds of the labor of others it must be stealing.

Second corollary: Since the amount of labor a man can do is necessarily limited by

his strength, then the more of the proceeds of his labor is stolen from him, the less there is left for him and the worse off he becomes.

General conclusion: The more ladies and gentlemen we have, the harder we must work and the poorer we must become.

Sayler read this document through twice. Then he handed it back to Helm. He was smiling cynically to himself. Said he:

"Q. E. D. But—why did you show it to *me?*"

Helm's gaze rested gravely upon that of the plutocratic chieftain for the Middle West. He replied:

"I see that you want to be friends with me. Why, I don't know. I am willing—more than willing to be friends with you. But I want you to have no delusions. I want you to know just where I stand—where I shall *always* stand."

"I hope so," lied Sayler, with a generous manliness that half fooled himself. "I'm not a zealot like you. I don't believe in men, in human nature. I think progress comes through the fierce struggle of brutality and cunning against the stupid shiftlessness and indolence of mankind. I admit there are arguments for another view. They happen not to convince me. But, believing as I do, I am more interested in the game than in principles. To me it is simply a game. And so, I like to see good players on both sides. I'd hate to have you come over to our side. God knows, your side is badly enough off for good players."

Helm's smile put into his rugged face a touch of fanaticism—as tremendous earnestness is called in these days when to be interested in anything but accumulation and appetite is regarded as eccentric. Said he:

"My side, as you call it, doesn't need any

players at all. It is simply—to change the figure—the irresistibly sweeping current. I am swimming with it, you against it."

Sayler surprised him by saying reflectively:

"I've thought of that. Sometimes I believe it."

"The right thing—the thing that's in accord with progress," said Helm, "doesn't need champions. The rainstorm doesn't need umbrellas. But the men who've got to go out in it—they do."

Sayler was admiring Helm's manner. It was not the manner of the condemned man—at least, if it was, it was that of a condemned man of the type that tranquilly accepts the inevitable. Yet Sayler knew that Helm was moving consciously toward one of those crises that put the souls of men to the cruelest test. Sayler understood him thoroughly now, understood the strong and

tenacious emotions that lay hid, or rather lay unexposed to any but expert eyes, beneath the surface look of the homely provincial man—provincial now, rather than bucolic, as he had been when he first burst upon the astonished and amused town of Harrison, with his strange red beard, and his much-tailed cheap broadcloth. "How this man could love a cause or a woman!" thought the sentimental over-lord of bosses and machines. "But," he added, "neither is appreciative—or worth loving."

Where Sayler fell short of greatness was in that near-sightedness which prevented him from seeing the big truths that dominate the horizon of life—such truths as that the high happiness is not of the give-and-take variety but is the capacity for sheer giving. The deep and serene joy of Helm, secure from all surface storms, was the

possession of a nature capable of *giving*.

Helm had not accomplished his only object. He had simply convinced Sayler of his value, not in the least of his inflexibility. Sayler prided himself on thorough knowledge of human nature. Convictions were, in his opinion, merely the creatures of circumstances. Change Helm's circumstances, change his outlook upon the world from the uncomfortable to the comfortable, and he would become a tower of strength for the existing order, for the guardianship of the masses by the upper class—a service for which the masses ought to be glad to pay with part of their only asset, their labor.

At the suburban house he had taken for that legislature session, Sayler put Helm—not into the library; he was too tactful to make such a blunder as to give him the reminiscent surroundings of the previous

evening—but into a home-like little smoking-room, next to the billiard room. Then he went in search of Eleanor.

Not often is a man able to gratify so many widely differing tastes as was Sayler by bringing together Helm and Eleanor. It pleased his natural amiability, his sentimentality, his love of mischief, his passion for political scheming, his impatience with the pompous and wearisome pretensions of her father, and several other minor tastes. Perhaps, as he entered the upstairs sitting-room where Eleanor was giving orders to her maid, amiability was uppermost in his mind. Amiability was one of his strongest traits; it is always a strong trait in the characters of politicians, and expands with use and with pretense. Said he when the maid had gone:

"George Helm is down stairs."

Before she could control herself, she had

betrayed herself by looking wildly round to escape.

Sayler ignored and went tranquilly on:

"I told him I was sure you'd be glad to see him. I know what a good judge of character you are. You must have seen what a remarkable man he is—about the strongest I've come across, among the younger men. He'll be nominated for governor next fall—and elected, I suspect. And he'll go up—and up. *There's* the sort of man you ought to marry, Eleanor."

"I don't want to marry *anybody,*" cried she with the pettish anger of a child.

Sayler made mental note of this sign of nervous tension, and proceeded:

"You are always saying that a husband who had already arrived would be uninteresting in comparison with one who had the makings of a career in him, and whom the wife could help—could work with, and go

up with. Here's your chance—and as good a one as ever was offered a woman."

Eleanor was listening—was looking at the wily schemer with wistful eyes. "You're not joking?" said she.

"I'm disappointed in you," said Sayler. "You're not so big or so clever as I fancied. You're just ordinary woman, after all."

Eleanor blushed, and her eyes sank.

"I thought you were big enough to see *him,*" proceeded Sayler. "But you saw only what you shallow women are able to see—the fit of his clothes, the absence of a valet, the lessons in manners he has yet to learn and will learn soon enough. You don't want the man with the career to make. You want the ready-made man. You want to have nothing to do but shine by his light, be his trivial ornament and plaything. Oh, you women!" He laughed with good-

humored mockery. "What frauds you are —and how little you count for."

"I am engaged to him," said Eleanor quietly—with a look that ludicrously mingled pride and fear and apology.

Sayler shrugged his shoulders. "An impulse you've repented," said he.

"I think I must have been crazy," said she.

"I think *he* must have been crazy," retorted Sayler. "But he has come to his senses. He's here to release you."

Eleanor's eyes flashed.

"He was caught for the moment by your looks," Sayler went on, with quick raillery. "But he is too intelligent to be ruled by such an impulse. Shallow men are, but not such men as George Helm. They assign women their proper place in the life of a man with something to do in the world and the ability to do it." Sayler's raillery veered

to a sarcasm none the less stinging for its cloak of politeness and good humor. "*You* sized *him* up—and accepted him. As soon as *he* sized *you* up—you under the glamor of that charming exterior of yours and that very deceptive cleverness—as soon as he saw *you,* he wanted to release you."

The girl's beautiful face, frankly expressing her emotions, gave Sayler the pleasure of delighting in his skill as a player upon that interesting instrument, human nature. A woman—especially a young woman—brought up in the false education custom imposes upon our comfortable classes, rarely has the intelligence clearly to distinguish a formable man in his early formative period. Or, if her woman's instinct for the real thing in manhood does by chance lead her aright, the courage to act is lacking. Eleanor had seen the man in George Helm—a degree, a kind even, of

manliness which she recognized as unique. But she had acted upon, had yielded to only his peculiar, his irresistible physical charm for her. Who, looking at his rough and rugged exterior and hers so fine and delicate, would have suspected the possibility of the existence of such a charm? She would not have admitted to any one—least of all to herself—that the male exterior that best pleased her was not the "polished gentleman," the flower of culture, but one exactly its opposite—primitive, rough of skin, direct and crude of manner. If Helm had been brutal she would have loathed him. But he was so gentle and tender—and what wonderful eyes, and what a magic voice!

Sayler laughed to himself. Here again was an instance of a phenomenon he amused himself by observing as he strolled through life. Time spent by a man in primping to catch a woman, unless she had been thor-

oughly vulgarized and snobified, was time wasted. He would better have spent it on training his voice.

Said Eleanor: "Of course I'll release him. I was going to write him from home. Do you think I'd best see him? Won't I spare him pain—" She flushed, as Sayler began to smile— "I don't mean that he especially cares about me. Simply that he'll be terribly embarrassed."

"Oh, if you're *afraid*," said Sayler, "you can send down some excuse."

"That would be cowardly," said Eleanor promptly, "and insulting to him."

"He's in the little room off the billiard room," said Sayler, departing.

Curiously enough, it was not Helm but Eleanor who was embarrassed when they were face to face. Her lips were burning—the lips he had kissed so tenderly yet so passionately. What a strong, simple *man*

of a man! If she had given way to her impulse, she would have burst out crying and flung herself into those long arms of his that had seemed to enfold her against all the ills of life. She could not meet the gentle, sad look those magnetic eyes of his bent upon her.

Said he:

"Miss Clearwater, I've come to do what I know you want me to do. I've come to release you."

"Thank you," she said stammeringly, without looking up.

"I don't know what possessed me. I took advantage of—of your kindness and liking. I hope you'll forgive me."

"I knew you didn't mean what you said," murmured she, meaning nothing but simply trying to prevent a painful silence.

"You're mistaken there, ma'am," said he. "I spoke from my heart. I love you

very dearly. I don't see how I'm going to get along without you. There's only one thing in the world that'd be harder."

She was looking at him now—was looking at his rugged, kind face—the face of a man born to suffer and born to bear without crying out. Such a lonely man—one of those large, simple, lonely souls. Said she:

"I meant what I said too. Just as much as you did. But—I—I—didn't mean to hurt you."

"You haven't hurt me, Miss Clearwater," protested he earnestly. "You've done me only good—given me only happiness. I'll always remember—last night—and it'll make me happy. I oughtn't to have said what I did about your letting me take advantage of your liking. It wasn't the truth, and I knew it. You are honest and good—and what you did was from the heart."

"As nothing I ever did before," said she.

"But you know as well as I do, that the hardest thing of all would be for us to be together. We ain't in any way suitable to each other. You're too fine and delicate for me."

"Please don't say that sort of thing," cried she. "It isn't like you—those snobbish ideas."

A puzzled expression came into his face. Then he smiled slightly. "You misunderstood," said he. "I didn't mean exactly that. I meant that you hadn't been brought up right—according to my notion. So—you'd be miserable as my wife, and a burden on me. Anyhow, it always seemed to me that I wasn't made to be a married man. The ladies never seemed to care much about me, and I guess that got me into the way of arranging to get along without them."

As he stood there, rugged and powerful,

his sincere face made tragic by the look of lonely melancholy that was habitual to it in repose, she was so moved that she knew she ought not to trust herself to speak. But she did—and her voice was shaking with sobs as she said:

"I know I'm not worthy of you. I'm so poor that I haven't anything that you need. I'm only fit for a very inferior sort of man. Oh, how vain and silly I've been—to imagine I was worth a man's while."

"Now, I didn't mean *that*—not at all," cried he. "I don't know how to talk to women."

"Indeed you don't!" retorted she. "You don't understand them, at all."

"I see I've offended you, Miss Clearwater. I didn't mean to."

"*Don't* call me Miss Clearwater," cried she desperately. He had not moved, but she had—unconsciously—drawn much nearer

to him—almost within his reach. "And don't—" with a hysterical little laugh—"*don't* call me ma'am."

He smiled with a kind of grim humor. "I don't see that it matters what I call you," said he, "as long as I can't call you mine."

She trembled. "Oh, *won't* you understand?" cried she. And she looked at him with eyes shining with passion.

He shook his head slowly. "Well—I must be going." With a sudden change to a look of terrific power. "If I stay here a minute longer, I'll not be able to keep my hands off you. I love you, Ellen—and it's stronger than I am."

"Why should you go?" said she, boldly. Her glowing heart told her it was no time for trifling, for maidenly pretense of coyness. That sort of game was all very well, with men who understood it—and men one didn't especially care about. But this man

didn't understand it—and he was tremendously worth while. Plain speaking, or he would be lost forever. She did not see how she was to marry him; but to lose him—that would be frightful. "Why should you go?" she said boldly. "Don't you want me, George?"

He put his hands behind his back. He grew pale; his eyes seemed deeper set than ever.

"No man ever made me feel, but you," she went on. "I belong to you. If you cast me off——"

He had her in his arms—not because of what she had said but because he could withstand no longer. "I've gone crazy again," he said, as he kissed her—as she kissed him—"but you know as well as I do that we can't be anything to each other."

"Don't think of that," pleaded she.

"Let's be happy while we can—and let's hope."

"There's nothing to hope for," said he, drawing away from her. "I'm ashamed of myself. I love you, but it isn't the kind of love a man gives a woman that he wants to live his life with."

"Take me, George," said she. "I'll be what you want. You can teach me. I'll learn. Don't shut affection and love out of your life. You can't be half the man without them that you'll be with them. Oh, you don't understand women. You don't know what women are for—what a woman is for—what your woman is for in your life."

The look of resolution had gone; the look of melancholy had come in its place.

"I know we can't marry right away," she went on. "I've got a lot to do, first. You are poor in one way, and I in another. We've got to wait and work." She looked

up at him, smiling, pleading, her hand touching his arm. "Don't you think it's worth doing, dear?"

He dropped to a chair. "I've fooled myself," he said gloomily. "I thought I was coming here to give you up. Instead, I came to get you."

She laughed merrily, her delicate hand tingling as it touched his shock of hair that grew in such disorderly fashion yet exactly suited the superb contour of his head. Said she:

"Well, you've got what you came for."

He smiled grimly. "How am I going to think straight and do what's right for both of us, with you touching me?"

"You don't want me to touch you?"

With a strong sweeping gesture, he drew her against him, as she stood beside him, he sitting.

"You know we might as well say we're

going to wait for each other," proceeded she. It is astonishing—and enlightening—how well women argue when they wish to. "You know we'll do it, anyhow. You won't marry any other woman?"

"There isn't but one woman for me," said he, with an accent that thrilled her.

"Do you think *I* could let any other man *touch* me?" demanded she.

There was a delightfully ferocious jealousy in the sudden tightening of the arm about her waist. He said:

"I guess we're in for it, Ellen."

Her arm went round his shoulders. Said she laughingly: "Women aren't so *very* hard to understand—are they?"

He eyed her shrewdly. "Not when they're willing to be understood. . . . You are *sure* you want to wait?"

"I'm sure I've *got* to," replied she, simply.

He suddenly stood up, drawing away from her. She was in a tremor of alarm—which was not decreased by his resolute expression, until he said:

"I must get to work. I've got to hurry things. You understand, you're entirely free until I'm able to come for you?"

"If it helps you to think so," she answered. "But—I'm not that kind of girl, George."

A look of tenderness flooded her and he said: "I didn't mean that. Of course you aren't. You're—mine."

And she was crying with happiness.

Sayler understood as soon as he saw her face. And he felt that he had won. George Helm, on his way to the triumphant class—was it not a fundamental law of human nature that a human being could not be *in* a class without becoming *of* it, of its ideas,

feelings, attitude toward other classes? George Helm, marrying a girl of the triumphant class. Could he, however tenacious, resist the influences, the subtle influences, insistent, incessant, unconsciously exerted, unconsciously yielded to—the influences of a loved wife of the triumphant class from birth?

"He shall be the next governor of this state," Sayler said to himself; and a smile more amiably generous than his never glorified human visage.

Helm saw "Ellen" only three times in the remainder of that week, and then for but a few minutes. He set to work with an energy that made his previous toiling seem a species of languor. He decided that Ellen had been right when she told him he did not appreciate the part of woman in the life of man. And when the legislature adjourned he went on a tour of the cities and

towns and villages as a lecturer, and built for himself that only solid fame—a personal fame which future assaults from a subsidized hostile press could not destroy. The people would have seen him, heard him, looked into his eyes, touched his hand. Sayler, away from the scene, and kept informed of events by lieutenants with lieutenant-brains, did not get the true meaning of Helm's tour, but assumed that making a living was his sole object. However, if Sayler had known—had even been able to read Helm's thoughts, he would not have been disturbed. Circumstances of class-association had made George Helm what he was; circumstances of class-association would re-make him.

Nor was Hazelrigg moved to suspicion by the enthusiasm with which the boom of Helm for governor was received, as soon as launched—nor by Helm's memorable

campaign—nor by the overturn on election day that swept Helm into office by a majority such as the Democrats had never dreamed of. In Hazelrigg's opinion it was all clever machine manipulation by Sayler's men of the Republican machine and by himself and his lieutenants. Helm had shown himself sensible and manageable in everything pertaining to the practical side of the campaign work; Hazelrigg began to suspect there was a secret understanding between him and Sayler. "That man Sayler," said Hazelrigg to himself, with a grin, "he's a deep one. He's the best in the country at the game."

Helm was, of course, at home in Harrison for the election—was at Mrs. Beaver's boarding house, in the attic room still, though he had nearly thirty-five hundred dollars, the savings from the lecture tour. Mrs. Beaver had tried to induce him to take

the best room in the house, at the attic price if that would be an inducement.

"No, thank you, ma'am," said Helm. "I'm very comfortable. Why should I move?"

Many people thought this sticking to his attic was shrewd politics. It may be that a desire to show *his* class that he was still with them had something to do with his refusal to move. But the chief, the deciding reason was the one he gave. He had lived in that little room long. He had got used to it. He liked it, felt at home in it, would have felt strange without it to come home to and live in. Helm was one of those men—and Sayler, had he been entirely great, would have looked into this before completing his estimate of his character—Helm was of those men—and there are women of the same sort—who care nothing for luxury, even for the comforts that soon

seem necessary to people who get the smallest chance to expand.

To him heat and cold were matters of indifference. He had ploughed and mowed in the broiling sun; he had slept under thin covers, with snow sifting through the roof, had brushed the snow off his skin when he got ready to rise. He had eaten all kinds of difficult, not to say impossible, fried food—and had not known what he was eating, or cared. He was so profoundly inured to hardship that he was unaware of it—and was unaware of comfort when he, by chance, got it. Hardened against hardship; hardened also against comfort and luxury. That last peculiarity was probably the most significant factor in his make-up. Yet no one had noted it; he himself not only had not noted it but never would. When one considers how powerful in effect upon human character is love of the softer side of life,

and desire for it and clinging to it and respecting it and its possessors, one begins to comprehend how far-reaching was the importance of George Helm's unique hardiness.

Eleanor Clearwater was visiting in the hill top part of Harrison—was visiting the Hollisters, where she could stop whenever she wished, and as long as she wished, without any one's thinking of the matter. Helm—regarded with respect by the better class at Harrison, now that he was so high in public life—had arranged to receive the returns at Hollister's. Bart Hollister, without a suspicion that Eleanor had "managed" him, invited Helm—and was as astonished as pleased by his prompt acceptance. So sweeping was the victory that his election was conceded by the Republicans before he finished supper at Mrs. Beaver's.

"A governor gets eight thousand a year, doesn't he?" said Miss Shaler, the sentimental, be-wigged old maid of the boarding-house circle. "You'll certainly pick on some nice girl and be getting married now, Mr. Helm."

"*Governor* Helm," corrected Mrs. Beaver, proudly.

"Yes, I'm sure there'll soon be a Mrs. Governor Helm," said Miss Shaler, with the soft hysterical giggle with which she accompanied all her frequent remarks on the one subject that interested her.

Helm surprised them all—threw them into a ferment of curiosity—by saying with bold, emphatic, even noisy energy, unbelievable in so shy a man:

"Yes, indeed, ma'am. She and I'll be inaugurated together."

He laughed with a gayety that seemed a little foolish in a grave governor-elect. He

gave them no chance to devise ways round the inflexible rule against direct questions as to that one subject. He rose and went forth to claim his bride.

V

SEEING HER FATHER

ON the second floor of the Washington house of George Clearwater, lumber king and United States Senator, there was a small room whose windows commanded the entrance. They gave upon one of those useless and never used balconies wherewith architects strive to conceal the feebleness of their imagination and the poverty of their invention. Of that particular balcony some facetious congressman said that Clearwater might one day find it convenient—"when he needs a place to stand and explain to the mob how he happens to be so rich." The remark got round to Clearwater, and he never looked at the

little balcony without recalling it. The multimillionaire, constantly enveloped by his crowd of sycophants, soon tends to become paranoiac, soon fancies that everybody is thinking about him all the time—about him and his money, which are one and the same thing, for he feels that he is his money and his money he. Also, as his dominant passion has always been wealth, he assumes that it is the universal passion raging in all hearts as firmly as in his; that therefore he must be the object of malignant envy; that those myriad eyes ever fixed upon him are as covetous as his own. Thus Clearwater took that facetious remark seriously—read the distorted tales of the French revolution, discussed the ferocity and restlessness of the masses quite as if he had never been a farm hand, one of those same masses, and had never known the truth about them—their ass-like patience, their worm-like meekness.

He was looking at this balcony and was thinking of the "menacing popular unrest" when George Helm's name was brought up to him. He was still looking and thinking when Helm himself entered the small room. At the sound of his step, Clearwater turned and greeted him with friendly constraint. Helm looked wretched with embarrassment.

"Ah—Mr. Helm—pardon me, Governor Helm," said Clearwater who had long since effaced all traces of the farm hand and of the stages intermediate to his arrival at the American business man's heaven, the plutocracy. "Much has happened since we met last winter."

Much had indeed happened, but the only blessed thing of it Helm could remember at the moment was the collar he had been beguiled into buying that morning. It was too high for him, and it squeaked. Also,

Helm had on a new suit of clothes; he had bought it only a few days before. He had not yet got used to it, but it looked as if he had slept in it. That was the way clothes always acted with George—and being elected governor had made no change. In answer to the senator's amiable remark he managed to utter—with a violent squeak and creak of the collar—a timid "Yes."

"It is no small honor to be the youngest governor in the United States," pursued Clearwater. "Won't you sit down?"

George looked at him as if "sit down" were a new and puzzling idea to him. Then he looked about at the furniture as if he had small and wanting confidence in it. However, as Clearwater sat, he ventured a nervous imitation and drew out his handkerchief.

A great misfortune—no, a fresh calamity. The handkerchief had been bought with

the collar. It did not squeak; worse, it rustled. The collar creaked, the handkerchief rustled, the new suit caught him under the arms.

Said Clearwater:

"My daughter—Eleanor—she has—has rather prepared me for your visit."

George feebly echoed Clearwater's amiable laugh.

"Senator Sayler, too—he has put in a good word for you. He is a great friend of yours—a great and generous admirer. He predicts a future for you—a dazzling future."

Helm began to murmur a reply, but the catch in his coat seemed somehow to have involved his vocal cords. He put the rustling handkerchief away, but in his pocket it still rustled like a mouse in a waste-paper basket. Helm's murmurings died in a kind of stifled groan.

"I am an old-fashioned American," continued Clearwater, passing his hand over his short gray beard in a pompous gesture as if this confession reflected the highest credit upon his courage and upon America. "I believe in the love marriage. I am glad my daughter has chosen—and has been chosen by—a man of the people, a rising, ambitious man, with a career in the making."

"Thank you, sir," said George.

Clearwater extended a cigar, which George took—helped him light it—lit one himself. "A very mild smoke," he explained. "I have Cisneros make it up for me in Havana from a specially selected leaf. If you'd prefer something stronger?"

"No, thank you," said George.

"Lord Cuffingham—the British ambassador—asked me to let him have a box to send to the King. Personally I have no more respect for a king than I have for a

plain American citizen. But we were talking about your wish to marry my daughter."

"Yes, sir," said George, a trifle less embarrassed, now that the cigar relieved him of worry about his large, very brown and very powerful hands.

"I shall confess to you, Governor, that if it had not been for the generous words Senator Sayler spoke in your behalf I should have hesitated about giving my consent."

George forgot his collar, the handkerchief, the coat—all his embarrassments.

"Your speeches in the legislature last winter—such report of them as I got—and in your campaign—I must say in all candor, Governor, that while I appreciate the necessity of pleasing the people, of soothing them by seeming to agree with them—still I must say that you—in fact at times you seemed to go even further than—than their

demagogues, in assaults upon property, and wealth and all that has built up the country."

Helm was leaning forward now, his elbows upon his knees, a fascinating look in his rugged face, in the kind yet somehow inflexible, blue-gray eyes.

"However," continued Clearwater, "Sayler assures me that you are a sound, safe man—that you have nothing of the demagogue in you—that you stand for the fine old American principle of freedom, of the utmost opportunity."

"What do you mean by opportunity?" asked George.

Clearwater frowned slightly. "I mean—opportunity," said he, in the tone of one forbidding further questioning as impertinence.

George settled himself back in his chair with a long sigh. "I see that Senator

Sayler has been too kind about me," said he. "He has given you a false impression of me."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Clearwater curtly.

His look and his voice were a warning that Helm would better draw back if he did not wish to provoke a wrath that had been not without difficulty soothed by Sayler and Eleanor. Helm understood. His eyes had never been kinder or gentler—or more direct—than as he replied:

"There can never be any political sympathy between you and me, Senator. I have made my fight thus far along the lines I believe to be right. I have not said more than I meant, but less."

Clearwater rose, rage flaming in his cheeks. "I suspected so!" he cried. "I can't imagine Sayler's object in trying to deceive me—to trick me into admitting to my fam-

ily one of this new breed of dangerous young demagogues who want to substitute anarchy and socialism for the republic of the fathers."

He glowered at George, sitting and staring into space, the look of tragedy, of profound melancholy strong upon his homely, gaunt face. He went on:

"You look like an intelligent man. How can you fly in the face of your common-sense? To get office, to lift yourself, you are willing to rouse the ignorant and the idle to hate and to assault the men whom God has raised up to develop and to guard this country! I was poor myself, and I was anxious to get up in the world. But I'd rather have thrust my right hand into the fire than have lifted it against my country."

George Helm heaved another long sigh, rose and regarded the old lumber king sadly. Said he:

"I sha'n't argue with you, sir. We'd only get into a wrangle. I simply couldn't allow you to misunderstand about me."

"Why did you come here, at all?" demanded Clearwater. "Did Sayler fool you, too? Has he been trying to make us both puppets in some political game of his? Why should he wish to humiliate me by tricking me into letting my daughter marry a demagogue?"

Helm flushed, but his voice was gentle as he replied:

"I think you're unjust to Senator Sayler, sir. He knew that your daughter and I loved each other. He likes both of us, and he knew you'd put your daughter's happiness above what he probably regards as simply a difference of political opinion."

"Anarchy and socialism aren't political opinions," retorted Clearwater. "They're criminal, sir, criminal. And I regard any

one who holds the ideas you profess—I regard him as a criminal. He *is* a criminal—an inciter of riot and murder and theft."

"No doubt you are honest in your opinions, sir," said George with quiet dignity. "But I must request you not to insult me again. I shall detain you only a moment."

"I can't conceive how you dared aspire to *my* daughter. Did you think *I* would be impressed by your being a governor?"

Helm's eyes twinkled humorously. "Hardly," said he. "They say that you own two or three governors. I know Sayler owns nearly a dozen. No, Senator, I didn't come to you as a public man but just as a chap who loves your daughter and intends to do the best he knows how to make her not regret having married him. You can see for yourself that I'm not pretty to look at, and haven't the graces of manner, or any of those things to recommend me to a lady. I

don't know why she's willing to take me. So far as my side of it's concerned, of course, as soon as I saw *her* I couldn't help wanting her."

Helm was so ingenuous and winning that in spite of himself Clearwater was mollified somewhat. "I guess Sayler's responsible for this," said he, with a grudging graciousness. "Well—we've found him out, and as there's no harm done we can laugh at him."

"Come to think it over," said George, "I shouldn't be surprised if Sayler didn't have a notion in the back of his head that if he got me married right I'd come round—fall into line and drop my principles."

Clearwater nodded. "And no doubt you will. But *I* shall not permit *my* daughter to be used for any such purpose." Very graciously, after the manner of the thoroughly virtuous, praising the feeble and

halting efforts of a young fellow man essaying the lower reaches of the path of virtue: "I congratulate you on your honesty—on not trying the unprincipled game of hiding your principles. I admire an honest man. It must have cost you a struggle."

"No," said George, "I had nothing to lose by speaking out. You are the courageous one, sir—for you might have lost your daughter—if I had been over sensitive and had taken up your hot words."

Senator Clearwater showed that he was at a loss to understand. Said he:

"At any rate, it's all settled. I shall explain to my daughter. For I must ask you not to try to see her again."

Helm looked at him vaguely.

"It would only cause both you and her pain," explained Clearwater.

"Yes, it will distress us both to disregard your advice," said Helm.

"My advice?" inquired the puzzled Clearwater.

"You are advising against her marrying me, as I understand it," explained George. "Of course, we may be mistaken, but we can't see it that way."

Clearwater was so astounded that his mouth fell open and gave him some difficulty before it permitted him to say:

"Why—what in the *hell* do you mean?"

"Now look here, Senator," remonstrated Helm, "what's the use of getting excited? You don't want to lose your daughter. It's me you don't like. Well—you need never see me. I'll go away when you visit our house, and she'll visit you whenever she wants to and leave me behind. Why shouldn't we get along peaceably? She's your only child. She's all you've got. It'll grieve her to know she's going against your wishes. Why not make her as easy as you

can? I don't expect you to pretend to like me. But you can just kind of—pass me over. I'll help."

Clearwater, warned by a slight vertigo, had seated himself. Said he slowly:

"Do you mean to say, sir, that you think *my* daughter will marry you?"

"Oh, come now, Senator," pleaded George, "you know how it was when you went courting. Would your wife have given you up, because her father and mother didn't like you?"

"Enough of this," said Clearwater quietly. He rose. "I wish you good day, sir. I wish you to understand that you will not see my daughter again—that she will not marry you—that if she did I'd cut her off without a cent. As you"—with scathing contempt—"have no doubt heard, she has some property of her own. It is very small—very small, sir. And I have control of it

until she is thirty—time enough to starve her out and to spare, as she knows——"

"Senator," interrupted George, "I hope you won't say these things to her. Do them if you think it right. I shall be glad if you do, as I don't want my wife beholden to anybody but me. Do them, Senator, but don't let on to her. She might feel that you didn't love her. She might—I hate to say it, sir—she might stop loving you herself, if she thought you could put money before love."

"I need no assistance in managing my family," said Clearwater, in cold fury. He bowed, "Good day, sir."

Helm hesitated, then bowed with simple dignity and withdrew. Clearwater watched at one of the windows until he saw him walking slowly out of the grounds and down the street—tall and lean, awkwardly dressed. Said Clearwater aloud with an

angry sneer: "He looks as if he belonged at the servants' entrance." The remark was not without justification, yet Clearwater knew—and the knowledge enraged him—that there was in the air of that figure, in the expression of that face, a quality, far removed from the menial, or even the humble. And it was that quality that made the arrogant and confident old man a little nervous as he awaited the coming of the daughter for whom he had sent as soon as Helm disappeared round the corner.

As Eleanor came in, radiant, expectant, she gave a quick glance round and exclaimed:

"Why, papa, where's George?"

To "papa" George had up to this time been simply what one man is to another—simply a specimen of the male sex. In this case, not a specimen likely to appeal strongly to the female sex, according to

Clearwater's notion of female likes and dislikes in males. But Eleanor's look and tone put a sudden very different complexion on the matter. Clearwater abruptly realized that his daughter—this lovely, delicate creature of fine manners, speech and raiment—was in love with the lanky, baggily-dressed fellow, half crank, half knave and altogether detestable.

This discovery, thus all in an instant made real to the father, instead of angering him, threw him into a panic. And out of panic, with its chaos of fermenting emotions, any emotion is as likely to emerge as any other. No one, in a panic, can predict whether he will emerge furious and implacable or trembling and abject. The reason for the panic was his adoration of his daughter. Rarely is there any greater intimacy between father and daughter than friendly acquaintance. But almost always there is

a tenacious and worshipful admiration—which, naturally, forbids the frankness of intimacy because each fears that the delusion of the other would be impaired, if not destroyed, should the truth of human weakness come out. The daughter adores the father as the superior type of the superior sex; the father adores the daughter as the embodiment of the female sex's two awe-inspiring charms, beauty and purity. Clearwater thought his daughter the most beautiful woman in the world, and an angel for purity—certainly, such purity could have no place in the mud-geyser of the world as he knew it. And he was now in terror lest she, idealist, ignorant of the realities, should not understand his attitude toward Helm. No doubt the fellow had talked his theories to her—and they were just the sort of stuff that would appeal to idealism and worldly-ignorance.

"Helm?" said Clearwater, almost as nervous as George had been with his squeaking collar and his rustling handkerchief. "Helm? Oh—he's gone."

"But I told him to send for me as soon as you and he had finished."

"We—that is, he——. Now, Eleanor, you must trust to my judgment about men."

Eleanor had an expression different from any he had seen before—in her face, in any one's face. "Father," she said in a voice that made him quail, though it was neither loud nor in any other obtrusive way emotional, "what did you say to him?"

"He was insulting," said Clearwater. "He insulted me. His presence was an insult. His ideas are an insult to us both. Eleanor, he is one of those men who go up and down the country denouncing me and

men of my sort—all the leading men of the country as robbers, and rousing the passions of the poor and the ignorant against us."

"You mean he's a Democrat and you are a Republican," said Eleanor angrily. "But what do I care for that? I can't fall in love with a man because he's a Republican, papa."

"He's not a Republican, nor a Democrat," declared Clearwater. "There are sane, sound men in both parties, and both are one when it comes to questions like law and order, respect for the courts——"

"Father," interrupted the girl, "*what* did you say to George? Did you send him away?"

"He is an anarchist, a socialist—a—a demagogue. He insulted me. He——"

"*What* did he say?" she again interrupted.

"As I've told you, he has attacked me—my sort of men—with lies and filth. He has——"

"What did he say here—a while ago—in this room?"

Clearwater, thus cornered, dared not wander too far from the truth. "He said plainly that he meant all he had said—that he had spoken less than he thought. He refused to retract or modify. He was——"

"How like him!" cried Eleanor, with shining eyes. "Do you wonder that I *love* him, papa!"

Clearwater was taken completely aback. "*You* approving insults to *me!*" exclaimed he.

"You know you'd have despised him if he had weakened."

"Eleanor, you don't understand. This man's conduct is criminal—is a grave of-

fense against society—is an insult to me—a menace to our property——"

"Don't try to scare me, papa," laughed the girl. "You can't. Maybe I don't understand his political principles. What do I care for them? It's a woman's business to love and then to trust. I love him. So—whatever he says goes with me, you foolish old papa." And she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him and mussed his carefully arranged beard with her chin.

Clearwater had the shrewd man's knowledge of human nature, was not without insight into his daughter. It is a mistake to think that men are fooled because they let themselves be cajoled; they are fooled, usually, because they wish to be, because their vanity or their hope or their affection gives their cajoler the aid without which he—or she—would fail. Clearwater was

well aware that Eleanor was artfully dodging the real issue. But how does knowledge that his beloved daughter is lovingly artful aid a loving father to corner her and bring her to ways of sense and reason?

"Let my beard alone," said Clearwater fretfully. But no one would have been deceived; under the fretfulness there was the male, ashamed of his weakness of affection for the female—but none the less weak.

Eleanor laughed and persisted in the mussing and mauling.

"You can't wheedle me, miss," declared he.

"Of course I can," laughed she. "You told me I could have him."

"I didn't know what kind of man he was. Now that I know, I forbid it."

She kissed him. "Then I'll marry him, anyhow. I've simply *got* to do it, papa. And—as Mr. Sayler says, if you were run-

ning for vice-president, or anything, it would be a good thing to have a man like George compelled to keep quiet."

"He'd attack me just the same."

"Then he'd do you good. People would simply think less of him for coming out against his wife's father."

"I'll not have such a character in my family," cried Clearwater desperately. He pushed his daughter away. "I can't understand your wanting him. After all the money that's been spent on your education, all the pains that's been taken!"

"I should think *you'd* look on my education as a tearing success," replied she. "It seems to have taught me to appreciate a man. But the education isn't responsible for that. It's because I'm *your* daughter. How could I help despising the men who couldn't do anything for themselves, who owe everything to others, who live like fleas

on a dog, papa—instead of being strong and rising up and up? Like you, papa!"

"Never!" exclaimed Clearwater. "I never was a demagogue, an inciter of class hatreds, a fermenter of envy—telling the shiftless and thoughtless——"

She shook her finger laughingly. "Now, papa! Be careful! I've read some of your early speeches—when you were running for Congress and starting unions in the logging camps."

The red, so difficult to bring to old cheeks, so slow to spread, crept over his whole face. It is fortunate that his daughter did not know the whole of the why of that red—the deep-hidden story of treason to the people who had believed in him, of viler preceding treason to his honester self.

"I was an ignorant fool in those days," shuffled he. "And this fellow isn't. He's intelligent and cunning."

She was too wise to linger upon this dangerous ground of politics, once she had scored. Away she sped, with a delightfully crafty, "I do believe you think he's after my money, father. I can see how you might think so. And you're right to convince yourself. Yes, I understand. You're putting him to the test. I'm glad of it."

"What do you mean?" inquired the puzzled father.

She was laughing gayly. "Yes—I see it all. Go ahead, papa. Oppose all you like. Make him feel that you will cut me off if I marry him. I *know* him. I know he doesn't need that test. But I can't blame you for not trusting him. You see, you don't love him—yet."

Clearwater was dumfounded. To have his flank thus neatly turned! And that, just as he was about to deliver the final and decisive blow—the threat of cutting her off.

He gathered himself together as best he could, whipped up his anger and said:

"But I shall do that very thing."

She looked at him with sudden, touchingly sweet incredulity. "Oh, no—you couldn't, papa. Not that I—not that we—want anything from you but your love. But you couldn't make a base thing like money a test of the love between you and me."

His eyes shifted. When a father seriously makes the threat to cut off a son or a daughter, however great the reflection upon the father, it is greater upon the son or daughter. Eleanor Clearwater had lived under her father's eye all the years of her life. He knew her—knew her character—respected it, feared it, as baser character ever fears finer. And stronger than his aversion to the George Helm sort of man, stronger than his passion for autocratic rule, stronger even

than his reverence for his wealth, was—of necessity—his fear lest his daughter should justly estimate him, should lose her delusion as to his true nature.

Our conduct is less a measure of ourselves than of those about us—those whose opinions we respect, those of whom we feel the need. George Clearwater gave up the struggle. Eleanor had won, not because her father doted upon her—for mere doting readily turns toward hate when its object offends—but because he respected her. Said he:

"If you marry him, it's without my consent. It's against my wishes."

His tone of gloomy resignation told her that she had won. She was astonished; for from time to time there had been in his voice a note that set her to quivering with alarm lest she should have to face the alternative of breaking with him or with George

Helm. And it seemed to her that in choosing Helm she would show herself selfish, unappreciative of all her father had done for her and would make her love for him look a poor feeble unmasked pretense. Said she demurely:

"You'll let us marry here?"

He made an angry gesture. "I don't want a scandal."

"You being rich," she went on adroitly, "a story that you were snobbish would be put out, if we married anywhere else."

"I don't care a damn what people think or say," retorted he so violently that she knew her shot had penetrated.

"But I do," replied she. "I want you to be vice-president, and I'd hate to be even indirectly the cause of anything that might interfere. You remember, Mr. Sayler said my marrying George Helm would make you more attractive as a candidate."

"You weren't thinking of marrying anyways soon!" cried he, angry and alarmed.

"George wants us to be inaugurated together. He goes in the first of January."

Clearwater began to pace the room with quick, nervous steps. "That means right away," he said.

"Oh, no, papa. In about two weeks."

He stopped before her. "And what's to become of *me?*"

"Why, I'll be with you almost as much as ever. We've always been separated most of the time—your fault, not mine. And I'm not going to take Aunt Louisa away from you."

"You are a heartless girl!"

"Father, for several years you've been urging me to marry. I've heard you tell dozens of people that you wanted to see your grandchildren."

At the thought of *his* grandchildren the

children of George Helm, Clearwater became purple and abruptly left the room. Also, he *had* been urging Eleanor to marry.

About an hour later, as he was at the front door to motor to the club, he met George Helm entering. He was so absorbed in the attempt to conceal his anger and hatred behind a manner of stiff politeness that he did not really look at Helm, therefore did not see Helm's frigid bow far more ominous than his own lack of cordiality. "Impudent adventurer," he muttered —when there was not a possibility of Helm's hearing any faint rumble of that carefully suppressed wrath. He cursed his weakness of paternal affection, marveled at his unaccountable lack of the courage to rise up and put down the whole abominable business.

At the club he took into his confidence old Senator Tingley, his bosom friend and

his partner in many a stealthy business adventure which neither would have cared to have had visited by any ray of the sunlight of publicity. Business aside—how often it is necessary to leave out of account a man's way of making his money!—business aside, Tingley was a kindly old patriarch, as genial as wise. Said he:

"George, it's the same old story."

"He's got her hypnotized," said Clearwater.

"Don't talk like a child," replied Tingley. "Nature's got her hypnotized. You could have prevented this if you'd married her off pretty soon after she got to the marriageable age. She's simply obeying nature that refuses to be put off any longer. We parents are damn fools not to realize that our children, even our pure, innocent daughters, are human."

Clearwater did not see how to deny

Tingley's unromantic but impressively simple and sensible explanation. However, he felt that he owed it to his daughter's innocence to say something in mitigation. Said he:

"She seems to be in love with him."

"And probably will be after they're married. Certainly will be, if he knows his business at all. He'll have the inside track and it'll be his fault if he don't convince her that he, the only man she ever knew, is a wonder of a special creation. She'll never suspect that all men are pretty much the same."

Clearwater winced before the frankness of his friend, too old to make pretenses and too wise to believe them. Said he:

"Aaron, how can I break it up?"

"Well—in a nominating convention, if you want to beat a popular candidate, you've got to have a man to beat him with.

It's the same way in these heart matters. Find another man—one she'll like better."

Clearwater groaned. "These damned young nincompoops you find round in society!" he cursed. "Really I can't blame her for taking the first fellow with jump and ginger."

Old Tingley nodded. "The altar men—the fellows that'll marry young girls—do seem to be mighty poor pickings. At least here in Washington—in 'our set.' "

When Helm entered the presence of Eleanor his manner had lost its frigidness and reserve but none of the gravity. She flung herself into his arms, clung to him passionately with a complete giving up of herself to her love for him. He held her, he caressed her gently, he showed in every look and gesture how deeply he loved her. Yet—if she had not been so intoxicated by her emotions, she would have felt, would

have seen that this peculiar young man not only was master of her love but also was master of his own.

"I *knew* you wouldn't let anything come between us," said she. "George, how wonderful it is to love a man one simply couldn't doubt. Do you feel that way about me?"

"That's why we're engaged," said he. "That's why we've got to marry."

"Father'll get over this," she assured him. Helm shook his head. "No; he'll be worse and worse—more against me. It can't possibly be otherwise. When you go with me, you leave him."

"Let's not talk about that!" cried she. "Since I've got to marry you—the rest doesn't matter."

"But you've thought about it?" insisted he. "You realize what you're doing?"

She stopped his lips with her fingers.

He kissed her finger tips and put them aside—with the compelling look of his eyes rather than with his gentle hand. He said:

"You understand you're leaving your class and coming to mine—and that the war between these two classes is going to be bitter and more bitter until——"

"But that's a long ways off. George," she said abruptly, "let's get married at once—to-day—to-morrow—as soon as we can."

"Why?"

"Don't you wish it?"

He smiled tenderly. "I'm married to you already—for good and all." He held her tightly in his long arms that gave her such a sense of peace and security. "For ever—and ay, Ellen."

She was sobbing. "Oh—I'm so happy—so happy," she murmured.

"But you must tell me why you want to marry at once."

She did not answer.

"Is it because you are nervous about—about divided loyalty?"

She nodded, keeping her face hid.

"Then you do understand? You have thought?"

She nodded. "And I know you'll do nothing but what you ought to do."

"What I *have* to do," he replied. "I'm going to enforce the laws. I'm going to ask for more laws of the kind that are for the benefit of the whole people—and I'm going to get them."

"You are going to attack—father?" she said, speaking as if she were compelled.

"Probably you've heard of Voltaire's dilemma?"

"No," said she.

"Suppose there were a button before you,

and by pressing it you could have your heart's dearest wish—wealth, fame, power, love, happiness—but if you did press that button, instantly a human being away off in China would fall dead. It might be an old man about to die anyhow—or horribly diseased—or some dreadful criminal—or the mother of some baby needing all her love and care—or the father and only support of a family—or some girl like yourself, about to marry and be happy. You would never know whom you had killed; but—some one would be dead. Would you press the button or not?"

"Isn't that terrible!" said she.

"Well, in these days the gentlemen who are so eager to be very rich have constructed a button—the corporation. It gives them their dearest wish—wealth and power. It removes responsibility away off, beyond their sight. They do not hesitate. They

press the button. And then, away off, beyond their sight, so far from them that they can pretend—can make many believe, including themselves—that they really didn't know and don't know what the *other* consequences of pressing the button are—away off there, as the button is pressed, people die, people starve, babies are slaughtered, misery blackens countless lives. The prosperous, respectable gentlemen press the button. And not they, but the corporation grabs public property—bribes public officials—hires men they never see to do their dirty work, their cruel work, their work of shame and death. They press the button—and the dividends pour in—and they ignore and forget the rest."

A long silence. He sat in one of his favorite attitudes—body bent forward, elbow on knees, eyes staring at the carpet. She slowly smoothed down first one sleeve of

her blouse, then the other. At last she said:

"Yes—that is it. I understand."

"We can't take any of that money."

Again silence. Then she:

"No, George—we can't."

"You are *sure* you understand?"

"Ever since we became engaged I've been getting ready to be your wife."

"You have no secret hope—perhaps unknown to yourself—that I will change—will join your class?"

"For a while—last spring—I had," she confessed. "But soon—when I knew you better—and understood your speeches—then I didn't want you to change." She smiled quizzically—"not even your tailor."

He looked down at the new suit in which he thought himself almost too fine. But he couldn't see how characteristically it bunched and bagged upon his figure intol-

erant of fashionable clothing. "Don't you like this suit?" he inquired anxiously. "I got it to please you. I hoped you'd like it."

"I *love* it," she declared. "I wouldn't have you changed one least little bit."

He rose. "I'll go get the license. We can marry to-morrow—and start for home. We can stop off and look at Niagara Falls if you like. I've never seen it."

She laughed and hugged him. He thought it was altogether because of the decision about the marriage. "Yes—do let's take in Niagara," she said, and she laughed again.

"I've got a lot to do before inauguration," he went on. "After we get to Harrison I may not be able to spend much time with you."

"How much'll we have to live on, George?"

"Oh—lots of money. The salary's eight thousand a year. We're going to live very

simply. I don't believe in acting the way our governors have been acting lately. We mustn't forget that we are working for the people—and that they are very poor. I take it that you don't care for luxury—or you wouldn't have bothered with me."

"I don't care for anything but you," she said. "And I know what I'm about."

"Oh, you'll soon get your bearings, and we'll be saving money. We've got to live after we get out, you know. And I may not be able to make as much as eight thousand at lecturing and law—*my* kind of law."

"Don't worry about that," said she.

He laid his hands on her shoulders and looked straight into her eyes. Said he:

"You understand that I mean what I say, Ellen?"

"Yes—George."

"And that it isn't going to be any different with me after we're married."

"It mustn't be."

"Out of your class—into mine—to stay there, Ellen."

"To stay there. I've learned about the men who use the people to step up on, and then turn traitors. I am marrying your life, George. You are not marrying mine—what mine has been."

They looked at each other gravely. And it was then and there that they took their real marriage vows.

The ceremony in the large drawing-room two days later was less impressive. In fact, it was absurd, as marriage ceremonies in the customary surroundings of pretentiousness usually are—to all who have an unspoiled sense of humor. The fussy and angry father, alternating thoughts of tenderness with longings to slay—the solemn-ass preacher in robes, with affected voice and sycophant manner toward rich Senator Clearwater—

the pretty grotesque accidents due to the agitation of Eleanor and the awkwardness of the lank and long governor-elect —the snufflings and weepings of Aunt Louisa, glad Eleanor was making a marriage that improved the prospects of her own grown and married children for a large share of the Clearwater fortune— these and all other absurdities and hypocrisies made the wedding something for the happy pair to joke about on the train.

"How much did you tell Mr. Desbrough to give the clergyman?" she asked.

George blushed. "I was going to give him twenty-five, but Bill said he was such a swell he must have fifty. So I had to let it go at that."

"Weakening already!" mocked she. "Five dollars would have been too much. He's a frightful cad—always fawning on rich peo-

ple and hunting a rich wife—and he a servant of Jesus Christ."

"You'll have to look after the money, Ellen," confessed Helm. "I'm a fool about it. I've got mighty little use for the blamed stuff, anyhow. Besides, it'll give you something to do."

She looked at him with a shrewd smile.

"You're going to test me?—isn't that it?"

He nodded. "I want to find out just what you've got to learn. Just because I *had* to go into this, I didn't go in blind. I can't do things that way."

"I guess we've both been doing a lot of thinking since last spring." She slipped her hand into his. "I don't know what I've got to learn, but I do know that I'm going to learn it."

He looked at her, with that expression in his eyes which gave her the sense of love

and strength and tenderness superhuman. He said:

"Yes—I can count on you, Ellen."

"As long as you look at me like that," said she, "I'll not ever be anything but happy. I'd not be a woman, if I were."

VI

THE TEST

IN the large back yard of the "Executive Mansion" the young governor, George Helm, was wheeling his first born—George Helm, also—up and down the shady central walk in a perambulator of the latest scientific make. The baby was giving the healthy baby's fascinating exhibition of the fathomless peace and content that can be got only from sleep. The Governor and Bill Desbrough, the state Attorney-General and his one really intimate friend, were talking politics. At the window of the sitting-room sat Eleanor Helm, sewing—when she was not watching the two Georges—*her* two Georges.

There are two things as brief as any in

this world of brevities—the babyhood of her first born to the mother who loves babies, and his term of office to the public man who loves office. It so happened that both these befell the Helms at the same time. George married Eleanor Clearwater, daughter of the lumber king and United States Senator, a few weeks before he was inaugurated; and the first baby came toward the end of the second year of that famous stormy term of his. It was now the spring of his fourth year as governor. Both he and the young woman at the window looked younger than when they married—without the consent which her father dared not publicly withhold, or indeed privately, since he had not the courage to cut himself off from his only child. The reason the hands were turning backward for Helm and his wife was, of course, happiness. A man often loves a woman—a girl—for the possibilities he sees

in her which he fancies he can realize. Indeed one of woman's best beguilements for "leading on" the man she wants is the subtle creating or encouragement of this same fancy. But when a woman really does love a man, she loves him for himself, wishes him to stay exactly as he is. Eleanor had taken the lank, tall, rural-looking impersonation of strength, gentleness and self-unconscious simplicity because that was what she wanted. Having got it and finding that it did not change, she proceeded to be happy. The slovenly woman's way of being happy is to go to pieces. The energetic and self-respecting woman's way is to "take a fresh grip." Mrs. George Helm was younger than she had been since early girlhood. She felt utterly and blissfully irresponsible; had she not her George, and had not he taken everything on his shoulders—except looking after the money-

spending, the house—and the baby? The house and the baby were a delight. Looking after the house meant making big George comfortable; looking after the baby meant making little George comfortable. As for the money, that was simple enough. In the first place, there wasn't much of it; in the second place, George gave it all to her and meekly accepted the small allowance for pocket money—all he was fit to be trusted with.

"Bill," said George to the lazy friend whom he had made into his political manager and had forced to take the office of Attorney-General—"Bill, you ought to get married. My wife takes all the responsibilities off my shoulders and leaves me free just to have fun."

Bill was amused. Only a few minutes before Mrs. Helm had told him that a sensible woman—meaning, of course, herself—

always chose a man she could trust and then turned over to him all the responsibilities and gave herself up to love and happiness.

George Helm's reason for looking younger was somewhat different. That is, he got the happiness in a different way. Much is said about the heavy cares of office, and certainly most men in high office do age rapidly. But Helm's notion of the duties of office was not that usually held by officials. If a man spends his time at secretly doing things which would ruin him, were they found out —if he hides service of thieves and plunderers behind a pretense of public service, naturally he grows old rapidly. Such secrets and such terrors loosen the hair and the teeth, stoop the shoulders, yellow the fat and sag and wrinkle the cheeks. But if a man has no secrets in his public service, if he spends each day in the rejuvenating effort to do the square thing without troubling

himself in the least about whether he will be misunderstood, or maligned, or beaten for a second term, he gets younger and happier all the time. For health and vitalizing no other vacation equals the vacation from lying and swindling and double-dealing and plotting that make up the routine of so many lives.

As the two men and the baby carriage reached the far end of the walk, Bill said:

"George, it's a wonder you aren't wheeling this cart up and down the main street."

"Too much noise and dust," replied the governor. "Bad for the fat one." He usually called his namesake "the fat one."

"You've done about everything else I can think of to get everybody down on you. You've made the politicians hate you by forcing through decent primary and election laws. You've got the railroads and the big businesses down on you by making them

pay taxes and obey the laws. You've got the farmers down on you by giving the railroads the excuse of their taxes for raising rates. You've got the breweries down on you by shutting up a lot of their doggeries and enforcing an inspection of their beer. You've got the merchants down on you by making them toe the mark on false weights and measures. You've got the men down on you because they say your 'honest' administration has made business bad, and increased the unemployed. You've got the women down on you because you and your wife haven't been social snobs and givers of swell entertainments, as governors and their wives always have been hitherto—and are expected to be."

George listened, much amused. "No friends left but you, Bill," said he.

"You haven't succeeded in pleasing anybody on earth."

"Except myself," said Helm.

They had turned and were once more moving toward the house—toward the young woman at the window. "Yourself—and your wife," said Desbrough.

"I hope so," said George. He was looking at her. His eyes always changed expression when he looked at her.

"When you took this office, you said you were going to please the people," pursued Bill.

"To *serve* the people," corrected Helm

"Same thing," rejoined his friend. "Now—you've found out that there isn't any such thing as the people."

Helm nodded.

"There are a lot of interests of one kind and another, big and little. The masses are employed by them to produce and are their customers as consumers. The interests rob them, both ways from the Jack."

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Helm nodded.

"There are pluckers and plucked, but there is no such thing as 'the people.' "

"Not yet," admitted Helm.

"You've been serving something that doesn't exist."

Helm nodded.

"The pluckers hate you because you've interfered with their game. The plucked hate you because they think you've put them in a position where they'll not be plucked only because they haven't anything to pluck."

"They don't hate me, exactly," said George.

"You're right. I withdraw hate. They love you. They go crazy at sight of you. They flock to hear you speak and they cheer you until you have to stop them to get through your speech. But—that doesn't fool you?"

"Not for a minute," replied Helm. "They think I mean well but am—dangerous."

"You hypnotized them two years ago," Desbrough went on, "and induced them to give you a legislature that had to put through your program. But the pluckers have organized and have put that fox Sayler in charge again—and they've got your humble friends of the workshop and the plow good and scared at last."

"But I didn't bring you here to-day, Bill, to talk about my political fortunes. What's become of those Western Timber cases?"

"Those cases you asked me to get up against the Western Timber and Mineral Company?" said Desbrough with a curious change of voice.

"Wait," said Helm. "My wife wants the baby."

Desbrough waited. Helm disappeared

with the carriage at the half-basement door; Mrs. Helm disappeared from the window. Affairs of state had to wait full ten minutes. Then Helm rejoined his friend with an expression of intense, if somewhat guilty, pleasure that gave the shrewd Attorney-General a clue to what had occurred within. Said Helm, with renewed vigor:

"What about those cases, Bill? You lazy pup! I've had to nag at you ever since we got in."

"Haven't I done all you asked?" laughed Desbrough.

"Yes—and done it well, Bill. But—how I have had to nag!"

"It'd 'a' been better for you, if I hadn't done so much. You've tried to set the world straight, George, in one term as governor."

"You're wrong there, old man," replied Helm. "I've simply settled each question as it came up. It had to be settled one way

or the other. I haven't had time to do anything but just the things that were squarely put up to me to do."

Desbrough's shrug was admission that George had spoken exactly. "I don't blame you, George," said he. "But you see how it is. Didn't I warn you?"

"That I was playing bad politics? Oh, yes. And I knew it. I knew how to get in, Bill. I knew how to stay in. But when it came to a show-down I couldn't do a dozen rotten things in order to get through one that was half way decent."

"Well—you'll go out, and somebody that's altogether rotten'll come in."

"How about those cases?"

"I'll take them up in a few days." Desbrough was trying to hide his nervousness from his keen-eyed friend. "Give me another week, George."

Helm laid a heavy hand on Desbrough's

shoulder. "What's the matter?" he demanded.

Desbrough saw he could not evade. "This Western Timber and Mineral Company—the T. and M., as they call it—it's a queer sort of holding corporation."

"It's the worst thief in this part of the world—a waster and a stealer and a starver."

"But it's a clever villain—the cleverest. It's got safety hooks and lines out in every direction. If you attack it you'll get a return volley from pretty near everything that has a voice in this state—newspapers, preachers, charity societies of every kind, doctors, lawyers, retailers. It's wound round everything and everybody."

"It's the big waster, the big stealer, the big starver—and the big corruption. Now, it has defied the government of this state—the people."

"The people doesn't exist," Desbrough reminded him.

"It's got to go."

"First crack out of the box—as soon as I begin to attack—it will close a lot of plants and throw fifty thousand workers—men, women and children—out of employment."

"Is that as bad as what it's doing?"

"No," admitted Desbrough. "Not one hundredth part as bad. But it'll *look* worse. Everybody will think and say it's worse."

"What are you afraid of, Bill? I know it isn't yourself. *What* is it?"

Desbrough looked steadily at his friend. "You know what the T. & M. is—*who* it really is?"

"Anybody especial?"

"It's controlled by—your father-in-law."

This was by no means the first time that George Helm had been faced with the difficulties necessarily involved in his having

married the daughter of one of the leading politico-business traffickers of the Middle West. But theretofore each difficulty had come in some form that enabled him to keep on his course without wounding his wife's sensibilities, and with no other ill effect than deepening his father-in-law's secret hatred and detestation. But now the long-dreaded crisis seemed to have come.

"We've warned that company several times," said he, reflecting.

"Five formal warnings," said Desbrough. "I've just given them a sixth. That's why I'm delaying."

"Six. That's too many. We've been more than fair."

"George, if I go ahead—I send two of your wife's own cousins to the pen—and disgrace her father—drive him out of public life."

A long silence. Then Helm said quietly:

"Do you think they'll pay attention to the warning?"

"No," replied Desbrough. He watched the lines growing slowly taut in George Helm's rugged face, and hastily added, "Now, see here, old man—for God's sake *don't* do another unpractical thing—the worst yet. The others only wrecked you politically. This'll wreck your home."

In the same tranquil way Helm said:

"Have I ever done a single unpractical thing? You know I haven't. You know—or ought to—that Sayler— There's a politician!—he put up the whole game on me. He fixed it so that I'd be forced either to do dirty work or to offend one after another every power in this state and so kill myself politically."

Desbrough suddenly saw the whole plot—simple, devilish, inevitably successful. And all his love for Helm was concentrated in

the deep, passionate fury of his exclamation —"The dirty devil!"

"No use calling names," rejoined Helm placidly. "He plays his game; we play ours. And anyhow, he has lost."

"Lost?" echoed Desbrough. "How do you make that out? I think he's won. Hasn't he done you up for a second term?"

"Even so, still he has lost," Helm answered. "His main object was to make us do dirty work. And we haven't—not yet."

Desbrough's eyes shifted. After a pause he said with some constraint:

"You want me to wait till these people have a chance to act on my last warning?"

Helm said:

"I'll give you an answer to-morrow. You're all ready to go ahead?"

"Yes."

"Then—I'll see you to-morrow."

And Desbrough did not envy him the rest of that day and the night.

In the afternoon, to the governor's private room in the Capitol came Harvey Sayler. Nominally, Sayler was a rich United States Senator and the state leader of the Republican party machine. Actually, he was the boss of the machines of both parties, was an overlord of bosses, was the plutocracy's honored and courted major-general for the Middle West. As the masses in their slow, dim way were beginning to realize that parties and politics were not matters of principle but of pocket filling—and pocket-emptying, Sayler was being denounced, was being built up into a figure of greater menace, and therefore of greater public admiration and respect, than the actualities warranted, powerful and dangerous though he was. But he had remained

the affable, cynically good-humored good fellow. Whenever one of the plutocracy's thoroughly pliant tools was in high office, Sayler and he always pretended to quarrel, got the newspapers to fool the public with big headlines—"Fearless governor (or attorney-general or judge) breaks with the bosses"—and Sayler and he met only in the stealthiest privacy, if meeting became necessary. Whenever a more or less independent man was in office, Sayler always kept on terms of the greatest apparent friendliness with him—for obvious reasons.

As Helm had shown in his talk with Bill Desbrough, he understood Sayler. And Sayler, knowing that he could gain nothing by deceiving Helm in their personal talks, gave himself the pleasure of being almost frank.

"Well, Governor," said he, "how goes the game of honest politics?"

"I needn't tell *you,*" replied Helm, good-humoredly.

"You'll some day see I was right when I warned you there was no such thing as honest politics."

"Did I ever deny it?" said Helm. "How could there be honest politics? Human society is, necessarily, modeled as yet upon the only example man had to guide them—nature, with her cruel law of the survival of the fittest. Men live by taking advantage of one another—of one another's ignorance, stupidity, necessity, cowardice. And politics—it's simply the struggle between warring appetites, between competing selfishnesses."

"Then what's the use of exhorting men to stop robbing each other?" inquired Sayler. "Isn't my plan the wiser—and the better?—to try to show the strong that they shouldn't strip the weak—that they should content

themselves with all the harvest, and not uproot and so prevent another harvest."

"I admit you have your usefulness," replied Helm. "But I insist that my sort of politician is useful also. You are trying to soften the strong, we to strengthen the weak. But"—with eyes suddenly twinkling—"I've been expecting you. I knew your plan was about complete."

"My plan?"

"You've been very cleverly forcing me into a position where I'd have every interest, big and little, in the state against me—a position where it would be impossible for me to get a second term—or any office. Well—you've apparently got me where you want me. So it's time for you to make me a proposition."

Sayler's smile was admission.

"Incidentally," pursued Helm, "you've made me punish those of your plutocratic

friends who were restless under your rule. They are now all back at your feet, I believe?"

Sayler laughed. "All," said he. "They'll not annoy me soon again."

"Well—what next?"

"I've come to offer you *my* position," was Sayler's unexpected and astounding offer. "I am going to marry again, and the lady does not like politics—my kind of politics—the only kind I can play. Also, I'm tired. I'd like to give my place to my colleague in the Senate and first lieutenant, splendid old Doc Woodruff. But he's a born lieutenant. He simply couldn't learn to lead. So—I've been training you for the job."

Sayler evidently regarded it as a rare joke that he, a plutocracy boss, had been training the most radical and anti-plutocratic governor in the Middle West—had been training him to become the leader for the plutoc-

racy. Helm, recovering from his surprise, was also amused.

"I've been teaching you the folly of your ways. You have had a free hand. You have done what was right. Result—general dissatisfaction, general distrust of *you,* general desire for a change back to us. The people say—'Yes, those fellows steal almost all the fruits of our labor. But they own the mines and the shops and the railroads, which practically means that they own the land. If we want to earn a living for our families, we've got to apply to them for permission to work. The sensible thing for us to do is to make the best terms we can. If we took the property away from the plutocracy we'd not get it, but our clever leaders would, and they'd rob us just as we're being robbed now.' Isn't that the way the people reason?"

"Much like that," admitted Helm.

"And there they show their shrewd sense. Oh, the people aren't fools—not altogether. They have intelligence enough. What they lack is *efficient* intelligence. They know, but they don't know how to use their knowledge."

"They're learning," said Helm.

"You mean your independent following? Yes"—Sayler nodded thoughtfully—"you have done wonders. I've admired the way you've built up a personal following of nearly a hundred thousand votes. If we didn't happen to own both machines—and therefore are indifferent which wins—your following would give you the balance of power. As matters stand, what is a hundred thousand, when we have nearly half a million?"

Helm was silent.

"You see the situation as it is," continued Sayler. "That's why I come to you. What

our side needs is another leader such as I've tried to be—one who shows the plutocratic fools their true interest—not to kill but to pet and fatten the goose that lays the golden eggs."

Helm was thinking. Sayler felt encouraged. He went on:

"You can make yourself as rich as you please. Or, you can remain poor, if you like. You can—in fact, you must—keep your independent following—and increase it. It is the power you can use to keep your plutocratic clients in order."

Sayler observed the thoughtful face of the young governor narrowly. Then he went on:

"There's plenty of time to consider this proposition of mine. I guess it will be attractive or not to you according as you decide that you can or cannot control your plutocratic clients to reasonably, humanly

decent conduct. I think you can. That's why I make you the offer."

"You had another matter about which you wished to speak to me?" said Helm.

"A good guess. Yes—I want to talk T. and M."

"To-morrow," said Helm. "Not to-day."

"I suppose you know that your father-in-law——"

"I've learned it."

"Being a public official, he's had to keep his corporation connections very dark indeed. Perhaps I should have told you. But I knew the secret in a way that made it difficult for me to speak."

"It didn't matter," said Helm, grimly. "I've learned in good time."

Sayler rose. "Your father-in-law telegraphs me that he'll arrive to-night."

"Keep him away from my house until eleven to-morrow."

"You wish to tell your wife first?"

"No. I shall let him tell her. But no one ought to hear agitating news before the middle of the morning—after the day is well started but while there's still most of the day left for thinking it over."

Sayler was touched by this evidence of Helm's minute thoughtfulness for the woman he loved. "Thank you for that suggestion," said he. "I've been letting my secretary tell me all sorts of news at any old time—with disastrous results to my health. My compliments to your wife. I'm hoping to see her before I go back to Washington."

At noon the following day Helm left his office—an hour earlier than usual—and went home. At the sitting-room door he paused. After a brief hesitation he opened the door and entered. As he expected, there

were his wife and her father. Helm glanced at the troubled face of his wife. Without greeting his father-in-law he said to her:

"He has told you?"

"It's true then, George?" replied she.

He nodded.

Clearwater interposed with angry dignity:

"I've been laying the whole case before my daughter, sir—your proposed attempt to disgrace and to ruin me."

Helm now looked at him. "You have had six warnings," said he. "You could have made your corporation obey the laws —or you could have sold your holdings and gotten away from it."

"We have disobeyed no laws," retorted Clearwater. "We have simply disregarded alleged laws enacted by demagogues to compel us to pay blackmail or go out of business."

"Your own lawyers drew the laws," replied Helm, "and Sayler ordered them passed six years ago. But they were intended for use against any rival to your monopoly that might spring up."

"You'll let us alone, or you'll never hold another office in this state," cried Clearwater. "I came here to ask my daughter to use her influence with you to save yourself from destruction. I had forgotten what an obstinate visionary you were. But I think even you will hesitate before breaking her heart, bowing her head with shame."

"I've told father," said Eleanor, "that I haven't any influence with you. I'd not venture to speak to you about a political matter—unless I understood it. And I've been so busy with the baby these last two years that I don't really know anything any more."

"Eleanor, I've explained it all to you,"

said Clearwater, deeply agitated. "If he goes on, it means disgrace to me. I can punish him—and I shall. But I'll have to leave public life."

Eleanor looked inquiringly at her husband. He said:

"Yes, dear."

"George, you can't do that!" cried she.

Helm winced. He said gravely:

"Your father—through his corporation—put it squarely up to me either to prosecute him or to re-license his corporation for robbing the people of this state."

"That's a lie!" cried Clearwater. "It's as honest a business as there is!"

"Yes," said Helm, "it's as honest a *big* business as there is—and as dishonest."

"You can't disgrace *my* father, George," said Eleanor. "You can't send my cousins to the penitentiary. Why, they're like my brothers."

Helm looked gravely at her. He said slowly:

"You are their cousin. You are Senator Clearwater's daughter. But you are my wife—you are our son's mother."

She was deathly pale, and her eyes looked her terror, as she said breathlessly:

"*My* father! Oh, George, you *can't!*"

"Yes," said Helm gently. "I can—and I must—and, Ellen, I will."

"*You* asking me to choose between you and my father!" exclaimed she.

"No, Ellen," replied he. "I am your husband. There can't be any choice between me and any one else on earth."

They gazed at each other, he as white as she. But she was trembling, while he stood like a strong tree. She said:

"Yes—I am yours, George. But—you will give me a wound I'll never recover from."

He said: "It will give *us* a wound that'll never heal. But—we'll suffer together, my love, as we have been happy together."

Clearwater watched them with awe. It was the first time in all his life that he had ever seen love—the reality of love. And the sight was so overpowering that it overwhelmed his emotions of terror and rage and hate. When he finally spoke it was with a kind of hysteria:

"My God, Eleanor! If your dead mother could have known that her daughter——"

Helm put his arm round his wife and interrupted sternly:

"If her dead mother could have seen you at your deviltry through that corporation—could have seen the starving wretches in your lumber camps—the blighted children toiling in your mines, the blood and filth on your dividend dollars, every one of them"!

"He lies, Eleanor!" cried her father. "He is a half-crazed crank——"

"He is my husband, father," interrupted Eleanor. And very proud she looked as she said it.

"You will do nothing to help me!" cried her father, in a sudden agony of fear.

Eleanor was about to reply. Helm shook his head, led her gently toward the door. He said:

"Leave us alone, please."

"Eleanor," shrieked her father, "if you yield to this man, if you give up your father to be destroyed by him, I shall disinherit you, I shall curse you. I shall curse you. I shall curse you!"

The daughter shivered from head to foot. Helm bore her firmly on, released her at the threshold. She cried, "George, let me stay! Please, dear! Let me talk with both of you. You are both so hard——"

Her voice had been faltering, for again he had fixed her gaze with those kind, inflexible eyes of his. She became silent. In the hall he kissed her, released her. Then he returned to the sitting-room, closing the door behind him. He said to Clearwater, quietly, almost gently:

"You had better tell your corporation to yield. If you don't, it will break her heart, as you see."

"We will not yield!" cried Clearwater, shaking his fist in Helm's face. "And after you have actually done your dastardly work, she will hate you. You think you own her, body and soul. You'll find out afterward. She will hate you, she will leave you."

"She will neither leave me, nor hate me."

There was in his voice the finality not of mere conviction, but of truth itself. For he knew—as only those who really love

and really are loved know—what he and his wife were to each other—the union that is a fusion which not even death can dissolve.

After a pause he went on:

"Shall I tell the attorney-general that formal notice of yielding will come to-morrow?"

Silence. Then Clearwater sullenly·

"Day after to-morrow."

Helm reflected, said: "That will do."

"You have won," sneered Clearwater. "Not much of a victory. You knew you could count on her, hard-hearted fool that she is."

"Count on her?" replied Helm, tranquilly. "As on myself. And I may add that I knew what *you* would do. What else could you do, if you failed to make my wife turn traitor and ask me to dishonor myself that you might go on robbing. Don't try to shift and twist out of your agreement

with me. Next time there will be no warning."

Clearwater reduced himself to the calm fury that is looking forward with a kind of serenity to a certain and complete revenge. Said he:

"This is the last year you'll ever hold office in this state—or anywhere in this country."

"Then your people have to live decent only about eight months longer," was Helm's amiable rejoinder. "I guess they can manage it."

"I am going," said Clearwater, moving toward the door. "I hope I shall never see either of you again. I shall hound you both into poverty. Then—if you wish me to take the child, I'll take it—provided you give me full possession."

"I shall remember," said Helm, simply.

His manner was that of a man who has

nothing to say, who will answer any direct question with unruffled courtesy, who will listen as long as his visitor wishes to talk, and patiently. Clearwater, discouraged, cast about for some speech that would help him out of the room. He could find none. So he abruptly departed, feeling more uncomfortable than angry. He could not understand his own feelings, his unprecedented lack of spirit. It did not occur to him that Helm, matchless as a manager of men, and far Clearwater's superior in intelligence, might have been responsible for this puzzling state of his.

As soon as his father-in-law had had time to get clear of the house, Helm went up to his wife. The "fat one" was solemnly inspecting his bright blocks in the middle of the floor. Eleanor was sitting by the window, gazing out into the tree-tops. She slowly became conscious that her husband

was at the threshold. She turned her eyes toward him.

Said he:

"He's gone. He has agreed to yield. So the prosecution won't be necessary."

Instead of the expression of relief he expected, she looked as if she had not heard. She came toward him; she laid her hands upon his shoulders and looked up at him. The "fat one" paused in the inspection of a block to observe them—his father and mother; he was trying hard to get acquainted with them, and to make them acquainted with him.

Eleanor said:

"I never knew until to-day what love meant—and that I loved you."

He laughed gently, and gently kissed her. There were tears in his eyes. The "fat one" dropped the block and opened wide his mouth and shut tight his eyes and emit-

ted a lusty howl—the beginning of a series that was suspended by his lapsing into his bad habit of holding his breath. Eleanor caught him up and tried to shake him back to howling. But he continued to hold his breath, to grow a deeper and deeper purple.

"If he only wouldn't do that!" cried she. "I thought he was cured of it."

"Give him to me, mother," said George, intensely alarmed, though he knew the baby would come out of it all right. He handled the "fat one" awkwardly, but it was touching as well as amusing to see the little creature in those long arms. He and Eleanor shook and patted and pleaded. But not until they were quite beside themselves did the "fat one" consent to resume. With a gurgle and gasp he suddenly expelled the long-held breath in a whoop and a shriek—a hideous sound, but how it thrilled those two frightened parents!

"I really ought to spank him," said Ellen with a hysterical laugh. "He does it on purpose."

"You fat rascal!" said George, waving a long forefinger at his son. The fat one seized it and abruptly began to smile. Peace being thus restored, George—of an analytical mind—said: "Whatever possessed him to burst out that way?"

Eleanor laughed. "I think he was jealous," she suggested. She kissed the "fat one" tenderly. "And he had reason to be," she added.

They played on the floor with the baby and the blocks—no; they played, using the baby and the blocks as an excuse. After a while George said:

"How little do you suppose we can live on?"

"Oh, as little as anybody," replied she carelessly, intent upon the house of blocks

they were making. "You see, so long as we've got ourselves, we don't need much else. You're building your side too thin."

George filled out the lower walls with a second row, like the walls on her side. Said he:

"Sayler offered me his job—running the two machines."

Eleanor gave a faint smile of amusement —as much attention as she could spare for an "outside" matter when she was teaching the "fat one's" clumsy hands to lay blocks straight.

"Shall I ask him to dinner when I see him this afternoon, to thank him and tell him I won't take it?"

"Yes—do ask him," said Ellen. "He brought us together—when you were trying to get away. No, baby, not that way—the long side across."

"Your father told me he was going to cut you off—and the baby, too, unless we gave it to him to raise."

Ellen smiled—amused, a little sad. She said: "Poor papa! He ought to be ashamed of himself for trying to interfere between you and me." A pause of several minutes, filled with building—repairing the ravages of a wild thrust of the "fat one's" fists. Then her mind went back to what he had said.

"I suppose he will cut us off," observed she. "I knew it would come to that, when we married. I'm sorry. You might have used the money in your politics."

"No," said George, working steadily away at the castle. "Money's of no use in our kind of politics, Ellen. It's been tried again and again. It always fails. You see, we're trying to make everybody see that it's to his interest to wake up and work. And

the only money we want is what our people must learn to invest, themselves."

Eleanor was building a tower now, and delicate work it was. "Wouldn't you have let me take it, George, if he had given it to me?"

"No," said George. "We don't need it, and we'd not let the baby be spoiled by it."

A long and busy pause, then Eleanor: "I've known *some* nice people with money. But they'd have been nicer, I guess, without it. It's so hard to have friends or to be friends if one has money—lots of money. George Helm, do untwist your legs. You'll get awful cramps."

"They're used to it," replied the governor and statesman. "Now, listen! now, fat one!"

And with a wild shout of glee the "fat one" fell upon the finished castle, fist and foot, and demolished it, and rolled in the ruins with his father and mother mauling

him and each other. The waitress, coming to announce lunch, caught them. But she was used to it. She laughed at them and they laughed back at her. On the way down, George said:

"I've figured it all out. I could force them to give me a second term. But I want to get my independent movement under way. So I'll let Sayler and Hazelrigg do as they like, and I'll run independent—and take a defeat."

"I'll be glad to get away from this house," said Eleanor. "I sometimes think it's damp and bad for the baby."

"Oh, we'll be back here in a few years, all right," said George. "I've got a lot of work to do in this job of governor."

"Well—by that time the baby won't any longer be a baby——"

She stopped short on the stairway. "Oh, George!" she cried. "Isn't that a *frightful*

thought! If we could only keep him as he is—and ourselves as we are—always!"

George did not like the thought either. But he said cheeringly, "I guess we'll find as many things to like in to-morrow as we've found in to-day. Anyhow, let's hope so."

She gave his arm a squeeze. "*Hope* so? We *know* so! As many things? More things, George—every day more and more things—to like—to love—to live for."

George was suddenly so happy that he carried her and the baby the rest of the way down stairs—she in one arm, the baby in the other, with equal ease. What a good old world it was, after all—if one only took it right! The one thing it lacked was "the people." If there were a real "people"—intelligent, persistent, not easily fooled, no longer conquerable and easy to rob and oppress through their ignorance and their prejudices—if there were "the people," re-

fusing to be ruled except by and for themselves, what a heaven of a world it would become! Well—the thing to do was to fall to and do his share toward making this "people."

They were at lunch—a little table, he, his wife, the baby in a high-chair. George and Eleanor looked at each other, and their eyes filled; for the same thought came to both. The "fat one" halted his spoon on its way to his mouth and looked inquiringly from one to the other. Said she unsteadily, laughing to keep from crying:

"Don't, George—don't look at me like that. We'll make the baby cry."

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THE END

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